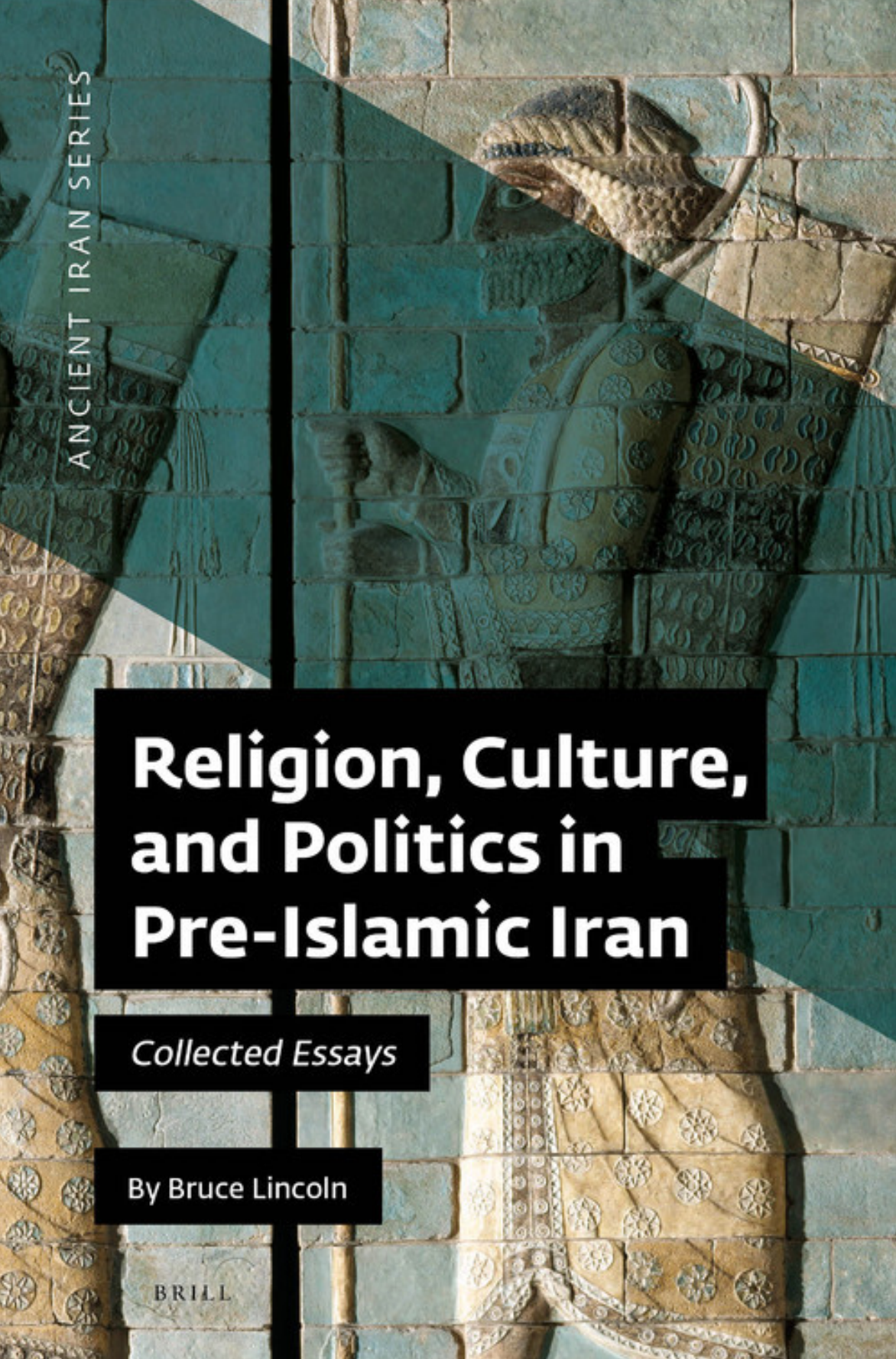
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Collected Essays
By Bruce Lincoln
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Religion, Culture, and Politics in Pre-Islamic Iran

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Preface

When Touraj Daryaee suggested publishing a collection of my essays on ancient Iranian religion, I was both surprised and delighted. While I have worked on other themes, cultures, and traditions at times, none has consistently held and rewarded my interest to the same extent as pre-Islamic Iran. And although I have always preferred to function as a comparatist, some of the authors I most admire (Arthur Christensen, Émile Benveniste, Marijan Molé), some of the teachers to whom I am most indebted (Carsten Colpe, William Malandra), some of the colleagues I respect most highly (Jean Kellens, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, Matthew Stolper), and some of my finest students (Heidar Azodanloo, Matthew Canepa, Ted Good) have been Iranists proper and to work in conversation with them has been a rare privilege.

The chapters that follow were written piecemeal over nearly half a century.[1] They are organized in four parts according to the body of evidence they engage most directly: Avestan, Old Persian, Pahlavi, and Iranian materials in comparison with other data. Within each part, the chapters appear in the order of their original publication, running from papers written when I was still a graduate student (Chapters 15 and 16) to those written within the last several years (Chapters 4, 5, 8, 19, and 20). With the exception of Chapter Twenty, all have been previously published, as indicated in the first note of each chapter.

Thematically, this body of work is pretty varied, including studies of myths, especially those with cosmogonic implications (Chapters 2, 5, 11, 15, 18), ritual practices, particularly those concerned with purity and pollution (Chapters 4, 14, 16, 19), cosmological constructions of space and time (Chapters 6, 17), points of intersection between religion, ethics, law, and politics (Chapters 4, 6, 7, 8, 19), ideological aspects of scientific and medical theorizing (Chapters 9, 10, 13, 20), social organization and gender relations (Chapters 1, 2, 9, 10, 14), and other diverse topics. No grand theory inspired these researches, whose coherence,

1 In addition to the essays collected here, I have written about ancient Iran on numerous other occasions: *Priests, Warriors and Cattle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), *Myth, Cosmos, and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), and *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), within the context of Indo-European religions; *Religion, Empire, and Torture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) and *"Happiness for Mankind"* (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), with a focus on the Achaemenid empire; and individual studies in *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 38–50, *Theorizing Myth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 183–91, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 109–20, and *Apples & Oranges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 73–121 and 147–83.

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I believe, reflects that of the Mazdaean tradition, which – like most religious systems that precede the fragmentation of knowledge into specialized disciplines – aspired to encompass all aspects of existence and experience within one unified understanding of reality.

Thus, as I meandered from one quirky topic to another, I kept getting led back to the recurrent perspectives from which Mazdaean theorists addressed all issues and questions. Often enough, I simply decided to research a detail that prompted my curiosity: the way Zoroastrians theorized whirlwinds (Chapter 12), insects (Chapter 4), and sexual reproduction (Chapter 9), or the way Achaemenid rulers moved among their capitals (Chapter 17) or put certain images on their coins (Chapter 8), to cite a few examples. Gradually, I came to perceive a common logic uniting the disparate materials I had chosen to study: a remarkably subtle, perceptive, challenging, and consistent understanding of reality.

From a few basic – but extraordinarily broad and bold – postulates, all elements of this worldview logically followed. In the first place, spirit was understood to precede matter and divinity was theorized as possessing absolute benevolence, omniscience, and creativity, but less than omnipotent power. This opened the door for its radical antithesis – a primeval malevolence marked by ignorance, envy, and destructive rage – to corrupt the perfect material beings the divine brought out of eternity into historic time and terrestrial space. Divine benevolence desired that existence be perfect, characterized by unity, tranquility, the absence of any tangible needs, and the life-sustaining qualities of warmth, moisture, light, and truth. Divine omniscience knew, however, that it lacked the power to ensure this primordial perfection would last, given the threat posed by its antithetical antagonist. Once extant, material being surely would be – and was – assaulted by the countless disintegrative forces that produce its undoing, like need, want, hunger, thirst, lust, despair, ignorance, lies, confusion, anger, conflict, disease, fatigue, darkness, cold, desiccation, the passage of time and the aging process. Invaded, infected, and corrupted by such forces, the divinely-created beings lost their perfection, falling subject to death and decay.

In the time and space wherein we mortals pass our lives, all existence is thus marked by ontological and ethical ambivalence. In the first place, there is the duality of matter and spirit, qualitatively different levels and aspects of being that combine to create living bodies, but which separate upon death. Second, elements of good and evil are both inevitably present not quite, but almost *ab origine*, since the primordial ideal was quickly marred and perverted by the admixture of its demonic antithesis. All fire thus has smoke and all water has pollutants, although the degree of smokiness and pollution varies from one

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fire or body of water to another. Similarly, the degree of ignorance, malice, falsehood, and ill health varies among living species, groups, and individuals, but no creature living in historic time is entirely free of such defects. Yet as we were initially created by the divine and only corrupted by the demonic at a later stage of existence, it is the inherent nature and responsibility of all living creatures to struggle against the disintegrative forces of non-being, so as to restore the original ideal of perfect truth, harmony, satiety, and contentment the divine intended for all existence. That ideal, moreover, is confidently expected to reappear at the end of history, when good will definitively overcome all that is evil and destructive.[2]

In the meantime, the struggle between being and non-being, the divine and the demonic, characterizes every moment of historic time and affects every aspect of embodied material existence. The goal of all thought is to better understand the nature of the struggle, so one can speak and act in ways that help truth, goodness, and life prevail against darkness, deception, and non-being. One studies astronomy and astrology, for instance, not from idle curiosity or concern for one's individual fortune, but to ascertain the state of contention in the heavens between the (mostly) Ohrmazdean constellations and the (primarily) Ahrimanian planets (chapter 13). Similarly, geographic and climatological knowledge were used to organize the Achaemenid king's annual peregrinations, so he could always be located at the point where the balance of warmth and moisture was most conducive to life's flourishing, for which he was responsible (Chapter 17). Yet again, a whole set of dietary prescriptions was established with the aim – quite literally – of keeping the cook's hair out of the soup, not out of aesthetic considerations, but because hair is dead matter and as such threatens the life-sustaining force of proper nutrition (Chapter 14). Having theorized all existence in historic time, worldly space, and corporeal matter as an incessant battle between the divine and the demonic, truth and falsehood, life's flourishing and bodily decay, the Mazdaean tradition attempts to provide theoretical grounding and practical instructions to all combatants in the struggle (Chapter 5).

2 The model of time, in which primordial eternity and eschatological eternity mirror each other in their perfection, but contrast sharply with the finite historic time they encompass, mirrors the way space is understood, whereby Ohrmazd resides in the boundless above and Ahriman in the boundless below, while the finite space between them becomes their battleground. The model also suggests a homology between the nature of the cosmos and the life of an individual, since the time allotted to any life is finite, filled with a mixture of good and evil, and characterized by strife, in contrast to the absolute peace and tranquility of the infinite time preceding that person's birth and the infinite time that will unfold after his or her death.

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It is easy to be caught up in the ideology, rhetoric, and self-understanding of this tradition: to sense and admire its ideals, purpose, and enormous ambition, as well as the painstaking attention it devoted to even the smallest details. Much of what I have learned from studying these details leads me to profound respect and appreciation for the intelligence, moral purpose, and systematicity of that tradition. Yet being an embodied being within historic time, I too am inevitably marked by a certain ambivalence and see that tradition – which, like all religious traditions, is a human creation existing in historic time – as itself ambiguous and contradictory. Thus, in addition to all that is admirable in the Mazdaean perspective, there is also the potential for its insistence on morally-freighted binary oppositions (good/evil, divine/demonic, light/darkness, truth/falsehood, foul/fragrant, center/periphery, life/death) to be brought into simplistic alignment with the contrast of Us and Them, such that men could assert their superiority to women (Chapter 10), Iranians to foreigners (Chapters 1, 17), Zoroastrians to those of other religions (Chapter 14). None of this should be ignored or argued away, but neither should it overshadow and discredit the utopian vision and aspirations of the Mazdaean tradition. Rather, consistent with its own commitments and perspective, we should understand the tradition itself as imperfect, flawed, and subject to corruption, but struggling to realize the perfection it imagines and thematizes in such clear and cogent fashion.

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PART 1

Indo-Iranian, Avestan, and General Iranian

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CHAPTER 1

Human Unity and Diversity in Zoroastrian Mythology

1

Humanity begins with a single individual according to Zoroastrian myth and that originary being was understood to enjoy immortality and a perfection expressed in his unity, as he was beyond sexuality or any other form of division.[1] The name of this creature in Pahlavi was Gayōmard (< Avestan *Gaya marətan*), which means "Mortal life," but some texts state that initially he was known simply as Gaya ("Life"). According to this tradition, his name changed when he was attacked and killed by the Evil Spirit Ahriman at the beginning of history, and his new name reflected his newly mortal status.[2] By introducing death, Ahriman had meant to destroy the Wise Lord's culminating creation, but – as the texts delight in recounting – evil is unable to overcome good in any definitive fashion. Ahriman being as ignorant (a prime

1 This chapter was first published in *History of Religions* 50 (2010): 7–20.

2 *Dēnkard* 3.209 (Madan MS. 229.19–230.10):

> The definition of humanity in its original state of purity is "life-force that is embodied and immortal" (i.e. +material existence/+eternal life); in the state of mixture produced by the Evil Spirit's Assault, the definition is "life-force that is embodied and mortal" (i.e., +material existence/-eternal life). This is the essence and the definition of things, which mankind has as its inheritance, being "embodied existence." This fate figures in the explanation of his name, Gayōmard, which was given to him after the Assault. In this time, the explanation of the name Gayōmard is "(mortal) life" (i.e., *gaya-mard*) in common speech. In the (original) condition of purity, his name was Gaya: "life" in the speech of power (i.e., divine or ideal language).
>
> *wimand-īz mardōm andar abēzagīh axw ī astōmand amarg andar ēbgatīg gumēzigīh axw ī astōmand margōmand. ud ēn hast xwadīh ud wimand ī baxtīg kē mardōm bē az abarmānd. ciyōn xwadīh ī mardōm axw ī astōmand. ēn-īz brēh andar wizārišn ī Gayōmard nām ān ī andar ēbgatīgīh* +*dād ud pad ān ī ka Gayōmard nām wizārišn zindagīh gōwāgīh ī mērāg. ud andar abēzagīh* +*Gaya nām būd hast zindagīh ī gōwāgīh nērōg.*

> Cf. *Dēnkard* 3.80 (Madan ed. 73.16–21), which defines Gayōmard as "the first mortal" (*mard ī fradom*) and says he was distinguished by three characteristics of the human. Two of these – life and speech – are from the Wise Lord. The third, mortality, is the result of Ahriman's assault, and will disappear at the cosmic renovation (*frašgird*) that marks the end of history and the restoration of perfection.

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characteristic of all things evil) as the Wise Lord is omniscient, the plans of the former always manage to backfire, sometimes with exquisite irony. Thus, while death surely detracts from the perfection of human existence, the latter was damaged and corrupted, but not annihilated. In compensation, sexuality and reproduction came into being and the human – now a species, rather than a pristine individual – came to be known as "mortal" (*mard* or *mardōm*, cognate to Old Persian *martiya*). A passage from the *Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* spells out the point.

> Ahriman affronted the bountiful Creator when he killed the sole person (in existence), who was called Gayōmard. Gayōmard returned to material existence, however, as a man and a woman, whose names were Mahrya ('Mortal,' with a masculine ending) and Mahryānē ('Mortal,' with a feminine ending). It is told that having joined through next-of-kin marriage, these two organized lines of descendants. The Lie did not gain hold of them, and generations of their progeny came into being through death. So when death spread among the living, their progeny and offspring also increased.[3]

This text, like most Pahlavi literature, was committed to writing in the 9th century CE, well after the Arab conquest of Iran, at a time when pressures for conversion to Islam were mounting and Zoroastrian priests feared they could no longer maintain their traditions simply through oral transmission. Clearly, the content is much older than the date of its inscription, but it is always difficult and often quite impossible to establish just how old it actually is or to establish the proper historical context for any idea or passage. With regard to the materials we are considering – i.e., those that narrate the transformation of humanity from a single, prototypic, asexual and immortal individual (Gayōmard) to a primordial brother and sister (Mahryē and Mahryānē),[4]

3 *Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* 36.68–69: *abzōnīg dādār owōn* $^{+}$*xwārēnīd ka-š ēk tan ī xwānihēd Gayōmard murnjēnīd. abāz mad ō gētīg mard-ē zan-ē ī-šān nām Mahrya ud Mahryānā būd hēnd. u-š wāxt* $^{+}$*kū xwēdōdāhīhā tōmagān rāyēnīd ud paywast. nē* $^{+}$*ayāft drūz be ō awēšān ud ān ī awēšān frazand āwādag pad margīh. tā ka abzūd abar marg* [*ī*] *zindagān az ān awēšān frazand ud paywand.*

4 These names appear in various texts with a great many dialectal variants, including Mahlyā and Mahlyiyānē, Mašya and Mašyanag, etc. I have chosen to normalize all occurrences under one form, but for linguistic discussion of the details, see H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the 9th Century Books*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 179–80.

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whose incestuous marriage gave rise to all the world's variegated populations – the situation is somewhat clearer than most.[5]

This is because a passage from the *Dēnkard* exists that provides a summary of the contents from a now-lost portion of the Sassanian Avesta known as the *Cihrdād Nask*. That text would have been part of the corpus assembled during the reign of Šapuhr II (309–79 CE), and presumably composed some centuries before, although there is no way of ascertaining just how far back the tradition reaches.[6] What the passage does make clear, however, is that the *Cihrdād Nask* was a compendium of ethnographic knowledge that traced human diversity to the story of Gayōmard and his descendants.

> The *Cihrdād Nask* treats: 1) the races of humanity; 2) how the Wise Lord's creation of Gayōmard, the first man, gave rise to the introduction of bodily form; 3) how the first couple, Mahryē ud Mahryānē, came into being; 4) their progeny and the progress of people in Xwanirah, the central world-region; 5) the distribution[7] of their progeny over the six world-regions

5 An excellent secondary literature exists on these materials, beginning with the extraordinary work of Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et premier roi dans l'historie légendaire des iraniens: I. Gajōmard, Mašjaγ et Mašyānaγ, Hōšang et Taχmōruw* (Stockholm: Kunglige Boktryckeriet, P. A. Norstedt, 1918). Other important contributions include H.H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1926), Sven Hartman, *Gayōmart. Étude de syncretisme dans l'ancien Iran* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1953) (not to be used without caution), Geo Widengren, "The Death of Gayōmart," in Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long, eds., *Myths and Symbols: Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 179–94, Bruce Lincoln, *Priests, Warriors, and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 69–95, Shaul Shaked, "First man, first king: notes on Semitic-Iranian syncretism and Iranian mythological transformations," in S. Shaked, et al., eds., *Gilgul: Essays on Transformation, Revolution, and Permanence in the History of Religions dedicated to R.J. Zwi Werblowsky* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), pp. 238–56, and idem, "Cosmic Origins and Human Origins in the Iranian Cultural Milieu," in Shaul Shaked, ed., *Genesis and Regeneration: Essays on Conceptions of Origins* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005), pp. 210–22.

6 Regarding formation of the Avestan text and canon, see Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965), pp. 246–59, Karl Hoffmann and Johanna Narten, *Der Sasanidische Archetypus. Untersuchung zu Schreibung und Lautgestalt des Avestischen* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1989).

7 Use of the term *baxšišn* ("distribution") to describe the processs of migration and diaspora connects these events to the Wise Lord's bestowal ("distribution," *baxt*) of a specific way of life (*ziwišn*) and a specific measure of good fortune (*xwarrah*) to each of the world's peoples, as described in 8.13.3. Pahlavi *baxšišn* and *baxt* are also etymologically related to Old Persian *bāji* ("portion"), the term used for tribute borne from the imperial provinces to the royal capitals.

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> around Xwanirah. It describes 6) all the races in detail, with attention to the commands the Creator sent to each separate race, ordering them to go to a place where their allotted way of life and good fortune were distributed to them; 7a) their migrations to every world-region, 7b) also the migration that took people to the outlying districts of Xwanirah, 7c) and the situation of the people who made their dwelling in the center; 8) the separation of the customs for each individual species of humanity that was created at the foundation of the races.[8]

All members of the human species were thus understood as part of the same family in the most literal sense, for they all descended from Gayōmard via Mahryē and Mahryānē. This is further established by the word here translated "race" (Pahlavi *tōhmag*), which also means "family" or "lineage" and is built on the word for "semen" or "seed" (*tōhm*).[9] Differences among the races, then, were theorized as resulting from the geographic dispersion of various groups from the world's center, the site of creation, to outlying regions, following commands given them individually by the Wise Lord. Once installed in their new locales, each group then received the particular traits (cultural and material) that would thereafter distinguish them from all other peoples. Once again, this was the doing of the Wise Lord.

This summary provides only a general sketch of the *Cihrdād Nask*'s contents, and very few of its details. Still, enough survives to let us conclude that it asserted the underlying unity of the human species. Second, that it regarded national, ethnic, and racial differentiation as functions of history, geography, and culture, resisting any temptation to essentialize these by grounding them in biology and nature. Third, that it took all the distinguishing features associated with different groups to have been God's gift to them. In all these ways, the *Cihrdād* advanced exceptionally generous, tolerant, and humane views.

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8 *Dēnkard* 8.13.1–4 (Madan ed. 688.6–17): *Cihrdād mādayān abar tōhmag mardōmān ciyōn brēhēnidan ī Ōhrmazd Gayōmard fradōm mard ō paydāgīhist ī kirbīh ud cē ēwēnag būd ī fradōm dōstag* +*Mahryē ud Mahryānē ud abar zahag paywand ī awēšān tā purr rawišnīh* [*ī*] *mardōm andar mayānag ī Xwanirah ī kišwar ud baxšišn ī u-šān pad* +*6 kišwar ī pēramōn Xwanirah tōhmag tōhmag ī nāmcištīg ōšmūrēd pad aštag frēstišnīg framān ī dādār ō jud jud tōhmag ī-š ō gyāg kū šud*[*an*] *framūd handāxtan ziwišn ud xwarrah az ānōh baxt ēstād. u-šān wihēz ī ō kišwar kišwar ud ān-iz ī ō kustagīhā Xwanirah ud ān ī-šān pad mayānag gyāg mānišn kard-iz be wizārdagīh ēwēnag ēk ēk* +*sardag ī mardōmān ī andar bun tōhmag dād estād.*

9 See Emile Benveniste, "Persica II," *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris* 31 (1931): 76–79, idem, "Études sur le vieux-perse," *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris* 47 (1951): 37–39, Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974) 2:94. Cf. Old Persian *taumā* "family, lineage," Avestan *taoxman* "semen, seed."

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This notwithstanding, the text contained another line of analysis potentially dissonant with its egalitarian impulses. This emerges most clearly in points 7a, b, and c, where it constructs world geography as a set of concentric circles in which peoples are differentially distributed by means of migrations. Thus, some people (those described in 7c) never moved from the central districts of Xwanirah, the region where creation occurred and these groups thus experienced least change from the original, ideal conditions of existence.[10] Other texts make clear that this centermost region was the best of all places, and its people – the Iranians – were the best of people.[11] Other, less fortunate peoples moved to distant parts of Xwanirah (as described in 7b), and others to the outermost world-regions (as described in 7a). The latter may have been meant to represent Europe and Africa, or they may simply have been continents of

10 Consider, for instance, *Dēnkard* 3.29 (Madan ed. 24.20–25.6; Dresden ed. 17.20–18.6).

The relation of Iran to the districts is that of the head to other bodily members. Thus, inevitably, the law and religion appropriate to the districts are the law and religion of Iran, which is their head. And from the arrival of the law and Good Religion, they have had profit, abundance and growth, as these came to them from the law of Iran, through their rule by Iran, which is lord of the seven regions and also of Xwanirah. Iran has been their lord since Hōšang, Tāxmōrup, Yima, Frēdōn, and other heroes, who came to lordship and power over them.

hēd ō kustag hannāmān az-šān sar Ērān-šahr $^{+}$*sazišnīg dād dēn az ham ācārdar ī Ērān ī-šān sar dād dēn. u-š az abar rasišnīh ham dād dēn wehīh ud sūd zōn ābzōn ciyōn-šān mad az dād ī Ērān pad xwadāyīh awēšān Ērān kē 7 kišwar ud kē-īz Xwanirah xwadāy ī awēšān Ērān būd hēnd az Hōšang ud Tāxmōrup ud Yim ud Frēdōn ud any-īz ēr ī ō awēšān ōz ī-šān xwadāyīh mad ēstēd.*

11 On Xwanirah, its virtues and people, see *Dēnkard* 7.1.26, 9.21.24, *Greater Bundahišn* 8.6–7, 29.3–4, *Zād Spram* 3.35, 3.86, 35.14, 35.39, *Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* 36.59, 90.3. Note also that the version of the mythic narrative found in *Dēnkard* 3.312 (Madan ed. 313.18–314.4) names the central region from which populations emigrated "Iran" rather than "Xwanirah," the two terms being understood as virtually synonymous.

The first word of instruction from the Wise Lord to the world of embodied creatures was transmitted via Gayōmard's thought. The second was by means of speech, via Māhryē and Māhryānē. The first command carried by a messenger came to Syāmag, Mahryē's son, and to his descendants, brought by the messengers Good Mind and Obedience (Wahman and Srōš). They transmitted the order for people to migrate **from Iran** to other countries and districts … People were thus scattered to the seven world regions, and there was progress of humanity in different countries.

az Ōhrmazd $^{+}$*waxš abar barišnīg hammōzišn andar axw ī astōmand fradōm ō Gayōmard menišn būd. ud did gōwišnīg ud nimāyišnīg-īz ō Māhrē ud Māhryānē. ud ān ī aštag frēstišnīg handarz fradōm ō Syāmag ī Mašī pus u-š frazandān pad aštagīh Wahman ud Srōš ud ān ī waxš burdār ī abar wihēz ī mardōm az Ēranwēz ō dēhān pāygos … axw ī astōmand ō haft kišwar purr-rawišnīh ī būd <ī būd> ī mardōm andar dēhān.*

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the imagination, but in either case, their inhabitants were barbarians outside the pale.

This less-generous perspective also surfaces in the *Dēnkard's* summary of genealogical information from the *Cihrdād Nask*. Apparently, the older text traced the lines of descent from Gayōmard, Mahryē and Mahryānē through a great many generations, paying particular attentions to the Iranian royal line.[12] At two points, however, it took pains to account for peoples who were not only non-Iranian, but chief among Iran's historic enemies (Figure 1.1). Thus, several generations after Mahryē and Mahryānē, kingship was created and bestowed on the first Iranian ruler, Hōšang, an eminently admirable hero. His brother, however, was Tāz, eponymous ancestor of the Arabs (Pahlavi *Tāzigān*). Such of his descendants as the text deigns to mention were scoundrels, monsters, and usurpers.[13] Similarly, the fourth Iranian king, the great hero Frēdōn, had three sons, each ancestor to a different race and nation. Most important was Irāj, father of all subsequent Iranians, who suffered jealousy and murderous animosity from his less worthy brothers Tōz (ancestor of the Turanians or Turks) and Salm (ancestor of the Romans and Byzantines).[14] In all these stories, the inferiority of non-Iranian peoples is strongly marked and structurally overdetermined. Occupying peripheral territories, they comport themselves less nobly, and descend from cadet lines.

2

Several Pahlavi texts contain materials that closely resemble the contents of the *Cihrdād Nask*, and details of vocabulary make it highly probable this

12 The genealogical content of the *Cihrdād Nask* is summarized at *Dēnkard* 8.13.5–18 (Madan MS. 688.17–690.2).

13 Hōšang and his rule are described at *Dēnkard* 8.5–6 (Madan ed. 688.17–22). On the importance of this first king in Iranian legendary history, see Christensen, *Le premier homme et premier roi* 1:131–64. Descent of the Arabs and the arch-fiend Aži Dahāka from his brother Tāz is mentioned at 8.13.8 (689.2–4).

14 Frēdōn's three sons are introduced at 8.13.9 (689.6–8) and 8.13.15 (689.15–16) states that the *Cihrdād Nask* contained "many books of detailed accounts of the races of Iran (*tōhmag ī Ērān*, i.e. the descendants of Ērāj), Turān (*tōhmag ī … Tūrān*, i.e. the descendants of Tōz), and Rome (*tōhmag ī … Salmān*, i.e. the descendants of Salm)." The fratricidal relations of these siblings are discussed in numerous other sources, including *Greater Bundahišn* 35.11–14 (TD^2 MS. 229.12–230.7), *Dēnkard* 7.1.28–30, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 27.43, and *Ayādgar ī Jāmāspīg* 4.39–41.

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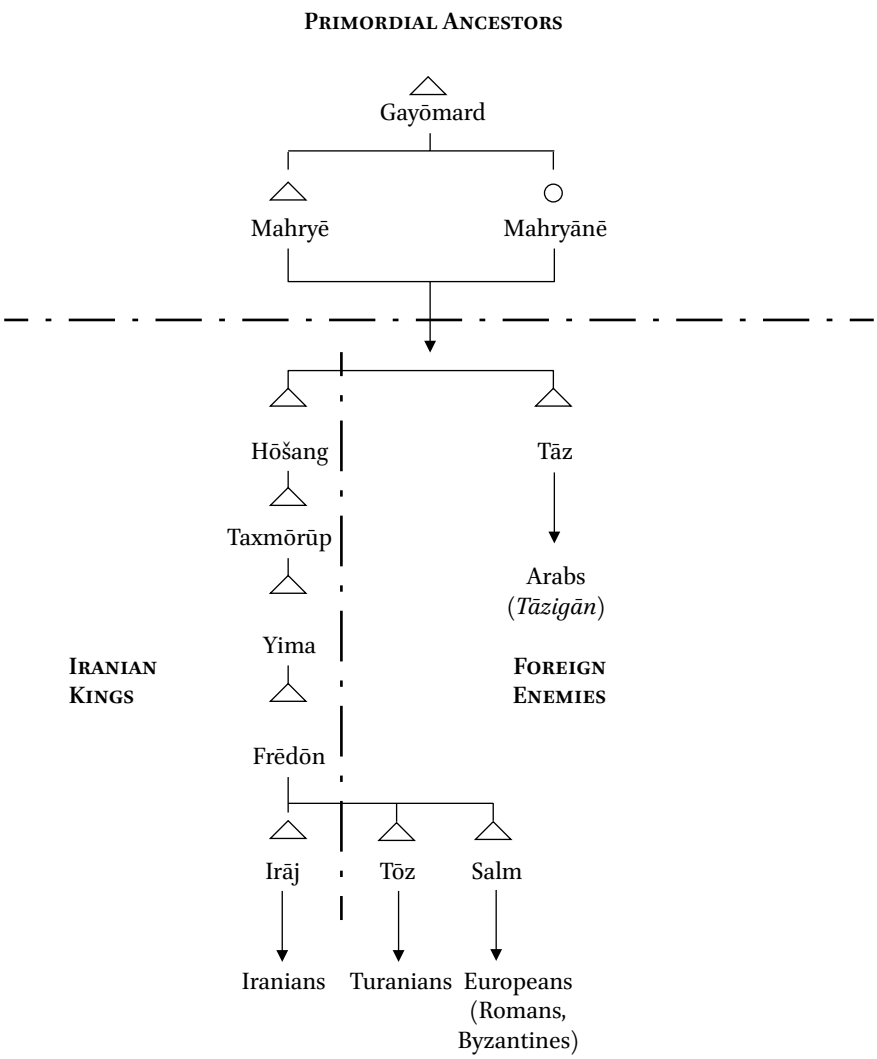

FIGURE 1.1 Mythic genealogy, as narrated in the *Cihrdād Nask*, according to *Dēnkard* 8.13.5–9

was the source from which they were taken.[15] One of these is a chapter of the *Bundahišn* entitled "On the nature of humans" (*abar ciyōnīih mardōmān*),

15 Thus, *Dēnkard* 8.13.2 uses the rather unusual term *purr-rawišnīh* to denote what we would be inclined to call the "progress" or "development" of Mahryē and Mahryānē's descendants, while summarizing the *Cihrdād Nask*. The same term recurs in discussions that are thematically quite close at *Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* 64.2, *Dēnkard* 3.312, and *Greater Bundahišn*

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which expands on the myths of Gayōmard, Mahryē, Mahryānē, and others, then goes on to develop an elaborate taxonomy of the species. Regrettably, space does not permit us to treat the intricacies of the mythic narrative, but we can do justice to the taxonomy, which holds more than a few surprises, also some important lessons.

Briefly, the *Bundahišn* account picks up where we left off, in the generation of Hōšang, first king of Iran and his brother Tāz, ancestor of the Arabs, adding the information that they were sons of a certain Frawāg, himself the grandson of Mahryē and Mahryānē. What is more, Hōšang and Tāz had other siblings: twenty-eight, to be exact, and all were organized in fifteen brother-and-sister/husband-and-wife couples. "From them, fifteen brother-and-sister couples were born and from each couple a separate type (or: species, Pahlavi *sardag*) came into being."[16] In this context, the types in question may be understood as nationalities or ethnic groups and the way the text treats these fifteen different peoples is too complicated for me to discuss in the present context. Let me simply note – no surprise – Iranians are put in first place.[17]

In addition to the fifteen national or ethnic "types" that descend from Frawāg, however, the text also says that another ten types descended from

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14.35 (TD² MS. 106.5). Similarly, the word used as the title of this last text (*bun-dahišn*, "Original creation" or "foundation of creation") recurs in the summary of the *Cihrdād*'s contents at *Dēnkard* 8.13.6, 7, and 20, where it is seemingly used as a technical term. (Note also *bun tōhmag* ["foundation of the races"] at 8.13.4 and *bun nihišn ī dād ī ēwēnag* ["original establishment of law and custom"] at 8.13.6. In the past, it was thought that the *Damdād Nask* was the prime source of the *Bundahišn*, but that the latter also made heavy use of the *Cihrdād Nask* is now commonly acknowledged as, for instance, by Carlo Ceretti, *La Letteratura Pahlavi. Introduzione ai testi con riferimenti alla storia degli studi e alla tradizione manoscritta* (Milan: Mimesis, 2001), p. 87. More broadly on this, most important of Pahlavi texts, Ceretti, pp. 87–105.

16 *Greater Bundahišn* 14.35 (TD² MS. 106.4–5)/*Indian Bundahišn* 15.26*: az awēšān 15 juxtag u-š zād kē harw juxt-ē sardag sardag-ē būd*. Pahlavi *sardag* is usually used to denote different plant or animal species, *tōhmag* being used for sub-divisions of the human. In this chapter of the *Bundahišn*, however, *sardag* is consistently used to denote the salient subcategories of the human species, which might be considered genera, races, nationalities or simply "types."

17 In truth, there is some manuscript variation between *Greater Bundahišn* 14.36–37 (TD² MS 106.6–107.3) and *Indian Bundahišn* 15.28–29, which only makes things more interesting. List I is the same in both variants, but List II, introduced by the phrase "In one account …" (*pad ēw mar*), which marks it as drawing on a different source, diverges in one of its six members. Close analysis suggests that List IIB (the variant of the *Indian Bundahišn*) has actually incorporated an older, binary system – the opposition of Iran and non-Iran – and dropped the most distant member of List IIA (the peoples of India) in order to accommodate the added category of "those in non-Iranian lands" (*ān ī pad Ērān dehān ān ī pad Anēr deh*). The data are as follows.

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Gayōmard, presumably in some parthenogenetic fashion.[18] These ten types, listed at *Greater Bundahišn* 14.31, are not ethnic or national in any sense. Rather, they are best described as "humanoid creatures," i.e. organisms whose

	List 1, Greater Bundahišn 14.36, Indian Bundahišn 15.28	*List 11a, Greater Bundahišn 14.37*	*List 11b, Indian Bundahišn 15.29*	*Presumed intrusive system in List 11b*
1	Iranians, descended from Hōšang	Iranians	Iranians	Iranians
2	Arabs (*Tāzigān*), descended from Tāz	Turanians	Non-Iranians	Non-Iranians
3	Giants (*Mazāndarān*)	Byzantines (or Romans), descended from Salm	Turanians	
4		Chinese, descended from Sēn	Byzantines (or Romans), descended from Salm	
5		Dahae (Dacians?)	Chinese, descended from Sēn	
6		Indians	Dahae (Dacians?)	

18 The chapter opens by quoting the Avestan source on which it draws.

> On the nature of people. In the religion (i.e., the Avesta), the Wise Lord says: "I brought forth humans in ten types. First that which is the white light of the eye, which is Gayōmard, down to the ten types, which are like one Gayōmard. The ninth from Gayōmard comes into being again. The tenth is the monkey, which is said to be the lowliest of humans.
>
> *abar ciyōnīih mardōmān. pad dēn guft kū-m mardōmān fraz brēhēnīd 10 sardag nazdist ān ī rōšn ī spēd ī dōysar ī hast Gayōmard tā 10 sardag ciyōn ēk Gayōmard 9-ōm az gayōmard abāz būd. 10-ōm kabīg mardōmān nidom gōwēd.* (*Greater Bundahišn* 14.1 [TD^2 MS. 100.3–7]).

Toward the end, the text returns to this idea and integrates it with the other contents it developed in subsequent passages.

> As there are ten types of people that were discussed at the beginning and fifteen types are descended from Frawāg, twenty-five types all came into being from the seed of Gayōmard.
>
> *ciyōn 10 sardag mardōm ī az bun guft 15 sardag az Frawāg būd 25 sardag hamāg az tōhm ī Gayōmard būd hēnd.* (*Greater Bundahišn* 14.38 [TD^2 MS. 107.3–5])

Clearly, the chapter is working to integrate two different systems – one with fifteen subtypes of the human, based on national/ethnic identity, and one with ten subtypes, based on physiological resemblances to the human in certain animals – to produce one system with twenty-five subtypes, divided into two subsystems.

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anatomical resemblance to people was sufficiently close that Zoroastrian science theorized them as subcategories of the human. In some of these cases, we are inclined to agree: we also classify dwarves and giants as humans who differ from others only in size, for instance. In other cases, our principles of taxonomy lead us to different conclusions, although we can understand why Zoroastrians recognized bears and monkeys – bipeds who stand upright – as hairy, tailed, sylvan varieties of the human. Somewhat less comprehensible are certain other cases, as, for instance, classification of bats as humanoids with wings. The full list, which can be understood as an extraordinary exercise in theorizing human alterity, reads as follows.

> Fifteen types are descended from Frawāg, and twenty-five types in total came into being from Gayōmard's seed, like *1*) the terrestrial; *2*) the aquatic; *3*) the one with ears like a man; *4*) the one with eyes like a man; *5*) the one-footed, *6*) the one that has wings, like a bat, *7*) the sylvan being, with a tail, who has hair on his body, like the animals whom one calls "bear," and *8*) "monkey," *9*) the sea-giant, whose height is six times the average, *10*) the dwarf, whose height is one sixth of the average.[19]

3

Up to this point, I have largely ignored the fact that the *Bundahišn* survives in two different versions: the "Indian" *Bundahišn* (the manuscripts of which were collected in Bombay) and the "Iranian" or *Greater Bundahišn*, which is about 40% longer. In the former, the chapter we have been discussing ends with the sylvan types of the humanoid, omitting dwarves and giants. In contrast, the longer text goes on to entertain the possibility that novel forms of humanity have taken shape after the twenty-five primary types were established.

> From each of these types, many other types more recently came into being. They also made evil mixtures come into being, like the heretic and the amphibian, a clayey thing that came into being from earth and water, and lives in both, and others (who arose) in this or that manner.[20]

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19 *Greater Bundahišn* 14.38: *15 sardag az Frawāg būd 25 sardag hamāg az tōhm ī Gayōmard būd hēnd. ciyōn zamīg ābīg nar-gōš nar-cašm ēk pāy ud ān-iz kē parr dārēd ciyōn šawāg ud wēšagīg dumbōmand* $^{+}$*kē* $^{+}$*mōy pad tan dārēd ciyōn gōspandān kē xirs gōwēd kabīg āb* $^{+}$*māzandar kē bālāy 6 and ī mayān bašnān ud widestīg kē bālāy 6 ēk ī mayānag ī bašnān.*

20 *Greater Bundahišn* 14.38–39 (TD^{2} MS.107.11–14): *az ēn harw sardag-ē nōgtar was sardag būd hēnd. kunēnd* $^{+}$*pētyārag gūmēzišnīh būd ciyōn ciyōn Zandīk/Zangīg* $^{+}$*ud ābīg-zamīg būd gilābīg kē āb bud zamīg harw 2 zīwēd abārīg az ēn ud az ēn ēwēnag.*

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Three points help us appreciate the importance of this brief passage. First, the phrase "more recently" (*nōgtar*) gives a sense of the historic self-consciousness possessed by the redactor, who extended the text's mythic narrative to address issues that had forced themselves on his attention. Second, in Zoroastrian discourse, the term "mixture" (*gūmēzišnīh*) is never neutral, but always points to the period of historic struggle when the Evil Spirit, the Lie, and associated demonic powers have invaded existence, spoiling its pristine purity and spreading corruption everywhere. To speak of "evil mixtures" (*pētyārag gūmēzišnīh*) is emphatically redundant. These mongrels and hybrids give cause for worry and, what is more, they result from unions that – in marked contrast to the ideal marriage of brother and sister – would be considered instances of miscegenation. Finally, the text contains a moment of highly suggestive ambiguity, since the word here translated "heretic" (Pahlavi *zandīk*) is homographic with *zangīg*, which denotes "African." Readers of the text could interpret this in either fashion, or they could note the ambiguity and understand the word as simultaneously referencing the extreme forms of religious and racial alterity, without distinguishing between them.

All these points are relevant for interpreting the ugliest passage in all Zoroastrian literature: an appendix to the chapter "On the nature of humans" in the *Greater Bundahišn* that was added as part of its final redaction and which appears as a separate chapter in the *Indian Bundahišn*.

> This, too, is said [in revelation]: "When Yima's royal glory departed him, due to his fear of the demons, he took a she-demon in marriage and he gave his sister Yimag to a demon in marriage. From them monkeys, bears, sylvan, tailed, and other destructive species came into being, and their offspring did not progress." Regarding Africans (or: heretics), it is said: "When Dahāg held power, he set a man on a female demon, a man on a witch, and in full visibility they had intercourse. From that one novel act, an African came into being, [one whose skin is black]." When Frēdōn came, they slithered to the edge of the sea and made a settlement there. Now, with the invasion of the Arabs, they are slithering back to Iran.[21]

21 *Greater Bundahišn* 14B.1–3 (TD^2 MS. 108.8–109.3) = *Indian Bundahišn* 23.1–3: *ēn-iz guft kū: yim ka-š xwarrah u-š bē šud bīm ī az dēwān rāy dēwī pad* $^{+}$*zanīh grift yimag ī xwah ud pad* $^{+}$*zanīh ō dēw ī dād. u-šān pad kabīg ud xirs ud wēšagīg ud dumbōmand abārīg winahišnīg sardag u-š būd. u-š paywand nē raft. zangīg rāy gōwēd kū: āz ī dāhag andar xwadāyih gušn ud zan dēw abar hilād. gušn ud mard abar parīg hišt u-šān pad* $^{+}$*wenīšn dīdārīh ī ōy marzišn kard. az ān ī nōg ēk kunišn zangīg būd* [**syā pōst kē-š būd*]. *ka frēdon* $^{+}$*mad awēšān az ērānšahr dwārist hēnd pad* $^{+}$*kanārag ī zrēh ī nišānedīg kard. nūn pad dwārist ī tāzīgān abāz ō ērānšahr dwārist hēnd*. The phrase "whose skin is blac*k*" (**syā pōst kē-š būd*) occurs only in *Indian Bundahišn* 23.2. Comparison to the *Pahlavi Rivāyāt accompanying the*

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This addition to the narrative is inserted at a crucial point in mythic history: the period of crisis that occurred when Yima, third of the primordial Iranian kings, spoke the first royal lie, as a result of which he lost his kingship.[22] Thereafter, the throne was seized by Dahāg (= Avestan Aži Dahāka), a monstrous figure whom the *Bundahišn* identifies as a descendant of Tāz, which makes him an Arab usurper.[23]

In this turbulent period, the passage just quoted would locate three sequential events. First, directly Yima fell from power, he and his twin sister Yimag – who earlier provided a model of ideal marriage – engaged in aberrant sexual acts, coupling with demons and producing the humanoid beings catalogued in the preceding chapter of the Bundahišn. Second, the wicked usurper introduced practices that were even more debased and degrading, as he forced unnamed commoners to mate with demons in full public view, to provide him and his court with some coarse entertainment. The offspring of these unions were the first Africans, whose dark skin apparently established their essential connection to darkness, Ahriman, and the Lie.[24] Finally, when Frēdōn

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Dādēstān ī Dēnīg 8e is also relevant. There, one finds a more elaborate version of the story in which Yima and Yimāg mate with demons, producing bears, monkeys, cats, leopards, frogs, leeches, and other species regarded as monstrous. Apparently, this tradition was reasonably well known and was used to account for certain kinds of noxious creatures. It recurs in a number of later texts, where it is further elaborated. Examples include *Dārāb Hormazyār's Rivāyat,* pp. 208–10, the *Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1932), pp. 580–81, and the Persian "History of King Jamšed and the Demons," published by Serge Larionoff, "Histoire du roi Djemchid et des dev," *Journal asiatique* 14 (1889): 59–83. In contrast, the Bundahišn narrative that accounts for the origin of Black Africans is absent from the *Pahlavi Rivāyāt accompanying the Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* and, to the best of my knowledge, occurs nowhere else in Pahlavi literature.

22 On the complex mythology associated with Yima (and Yimag), see Arthur Christensen, *Les types du premier homme et du premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des iraniens: 2. Jim* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1934), Jean Kellens, "Le jumeau primordial: un problème de mythologie comparée indo-iranienne," *Académie royale de Belgique des sciences* 11 (2000): 243–54, and Helmut Humbach, "Yima/Jamšēd," in Carlo Cereti, et al., eds., *Varia Iranica* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2004), pp. 45–58.

23 Thus *Greater Bundahišn* 35.7 (TD^2 MS. 228.15–229.4). Dahāg is also identified as an Arab at *Dēnkard* 8.13.8, but this identification seems to come late and he is more generally defined simply as non-Iranian. Different texts make him out to be a Babylonian, an Indian, a Jew, or whatever specific instantiation of alterity best served the immediate discursive and political needs.

24 For blackness as a mark of the demonic, see also *Dēnkard* 7.6.7, where it is said of Ahriman "he himself was black and his actions were also black upon black." *kū xwad syā būd u-š kunišn-iz syā syā būd*. Also relevant is *Greater Bundahišn* 1.47 (TD^2 MS. 11.10–12): " From the material darkness, which is his own body, the Foul Spirit mis-created his creatures in the form of blackness, which is (the color of) ashes: liars worthy of darkness, like the most sin-introducing vermin." *gannāg mēnōg az gētīg tārīgīh ān ī xwēš tan* [*ī*] *dām frāz kirrēnīd*

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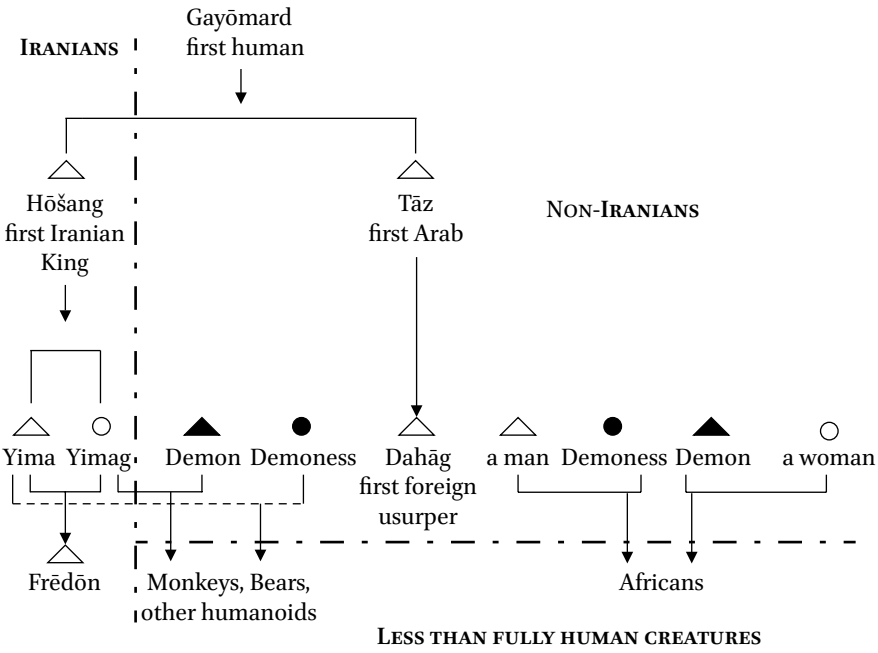

FIGURE 1.2 Demonic genesis of less-than-fully human species according to *Greater Bundahišn* 14B.1–3

reclaimed the throne for the Iranian nation and royal line, he restored moral, political, geographic, and cosmic order, as evidenced by his having driven the Africans back to the edge of the sea. Here, one should note that the verb used to denote the way these people moved – Pahlavi *dwāristan*, which I have translated as "slither" – is normally reserved for demons, vermin and monsters and it suggests a form of motion so distressingly crooked, threatening, and abnormal as to reveal their miscreant nature (Figure 1.2).

Conceivably, however, the most significant detail of the entire passage is its last sentence, which establishes the context in which this text was written: "Now, with the invasion of the Arabs, they are slithering back to Iran."

We can thus place the text – and the hateful attitudes it expresses – in the immediate aftermath of the Islamic conquest and the fall of the Sassanian empire (mid-7th century CE). In this new situation, Iranians found themselves subject to the power of others whom they had long regarded as inferiors, others who lived far from their own self-defined center, but had invaded and

pad ān ī kirb ī syāih ī ādurestar ī tom-arzānīg druwand ciyōn bazag-adēntar xrafstar. Cf. *Zād Spram* 1.29, 35.32–33.

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overrun Iran. That Iranians reacted to this experience with shock and resentment, should hardly occasion surprise. What is startling, however, is the fact that the most intense expression of these negative feelings was directed not at the Arab conquerors, but at another population, onto whom such sentiments were effectively displaced. The point is of extraordinary historical and theoretical importance. If we want to understand how older discourses of alterity transpose into those much more virulent types of xenophobia tantamount to racism, we have here a classic – and highly instructive – example. The conclusion one can draw is that when a former imperial power, accustomed to dominating others, itself becomes dominated, it may hesitate to express the full measure of its fear, loathing, and contempt on those who now hold power. Instead, it may discharge its most extreme, also its most dangerous feelings on some other group that remains weaker than itself, preferably one that is markedly different in physiology and appearance, one whose normal dwelling-place is distant, but with whom it feels it has been forced to commingle in the cosmopolitanism of a newly-emergent empire, or in the backwash of its own post-imperial moment.

This is, of course, the situation of Germany after Napoleon's victories of 1807, and once again after 1918. The Armenian genocide in post-Ottoman Turkey might be considered, and attitudes in post-Hapsburg Austria are also instructive, as is the experience of the American South after the Civil War. Similarly, one might look to the situation of Han Chinese after their native dynasty of the Ming were conquered by the Mongols, or to England after the Second World War and the period of decolonization. The case of post-Soviet Russia is probably too early to judge, and one can only speculate about what will happen in the U.S. in the period now on the horizon. Gobineau, who still mourned for the French Ancien régime, even as he served the emergent Second Empire is probably a special case, but even so, one has no shortage of examples.

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CHAPTER 2

The One and the Many in Iranian Creation Myths

1

If I may indulge in a moment of reminiscence – a personal creation account of sorts – I first discovered the study of myth in the 1960s, when T.S. Eliot's "The Wasteland" (required reading for undergraduates of the era) led me to Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and attempts to locate contemporary studies of a similar sort led me to Mircea Eliade's *Cosmos and History* (aka *The Myth of the Eternal Return*).[1] All three works fascinated me, but the first and last had the deepest effects, for they shared a vision I found attractive as an alienated and callow adolescent. Eliot's searing verses, accompanied by his learned, if quirky, footnotes identified modernity's woes not as political, social, or economic (as conventional wisdom had it), but as cultural and religious in nature. More precisely, he lamented the West's loss of myth, the genre that provided meaning and inspiration to our forebears, while uniting them around a set of orienting traditions and shared beliefs.

I am embarrassed to say I found this argument bracingly novel, not knowing enough to recognize the strong imprint of Charles Maurras and other reactionaries who had long championed unity under King, Church, and sacred truth against secularism, liberalism, and the other forces of disintegration they associated with the Enlightenment and French Revolution.[2] Eliade shared a

1 This chapter was originally published in *Archiv für Religionsgeschiche* 13 (2012): 15–30. T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land" (1922), in *Collected Poems 1909–1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), pp. 51–76, Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 3rd ed. in 12 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911–15), Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), originally titled *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: archétypes et répétition* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), republished under the titles *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper, 1959).

2 There is a large literature on Eliot's ideological underpinnings, which are usually traced to the "integral nationalism" of Charles Maurras. Among the more recent works on Eliot, see Roger Kojecky, *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971), Michael Tratner, *Modernism and Mass Politics: Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), Kenneth Asher, *T.S. Eliot and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Jules Anthony, *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Paul Morrison, *The Poetics of Fascism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Paul de Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Jason Harding, *The Criterion: Cultural Politics and Periodical Networks in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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similar genealogy, about which I was equally ignorant,[3] but he differed from Eliot, in several ways I found appealing. First, he was a scholar and not a poet, which is to say his text persuaded – rather, overpowered – the reader by copious citations and massive demonstration of learning, rather than the lure of its imagery, language, and allusions. Second, his scope was even vaster than Eliot's. Where the latter plumbed classical, Biblical, and medieval sources, adding a few choice morsels from India, Eliade's mastery seemed encyclopedic and global, with African, Melanesian, Siberian, New World, and other exotic examples joining those in Eliot's mix. Finally, where Eliot focused on the myths of "Dying and Rising Gods" that Frazer made famous (but which fell into discredit with him), these had less importance for Eliade, for whom vegetative myths were but one type of creation account, cosmogony being the general form in which all manner of peoples encoded the foundational beliefs that imbued the particularities of their lives with coherence and meaning. This orientation toward the ideals embedded in myths of creation he called "nostalgia for paradise." For him, it summarized everything that was right with "archaic" societies; its loss was the fall that produced all the ills of the modern.[4]

To the extent that I remain Eliade's student, I continue to think cosmogonies play an important role in most societies and religious systems, and that nostalgia for paradise remains a recurrent theme. On other points, my views have diverged from those of my mentor. First, I doubt that pre-modern societies

3 Recent work on Eliade, particularly by French and Italian scholars, has emphasized the influence of Nae Ionescu and the Romanian Legionary movement, also that of Réné Guénon, Julius Evola, and their style of "traditionalism." See Paola Pisi, "I 'tradizionalisti' e la formazione del pensiero di Eliade," in Luciano Arcella, et al., eds., *Confronto con Mircea Eliade* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1998), pp. 43–133, Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco: l'oubli du fascisme. Trois intellectuels roumains dans la tourmente du siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), Cristiano Grottanelli, "Mircea Eliade, Carl Schmitt, René Guénon, 1942" *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 219 (2002): 325–356, Florin Turcanu, *Mircea Eliade: le prisonnier de l'histoire* (Paris: Découverte, 2003), Daniel Dubuisson, *Impostures et pseudo-science: L'oeuvre de Mircea Eliade* (Villeneuve d'Asq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2005), Natale Spineto, *Mircea Eliade, storico delle religioni* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2006), Marcello de Martino, *Mircea Eliade Esoterico* (Rome: Edizioni Settimo Sigillo, 2007), Christian Wedemeyer and Wendy Doniger, eds., *Hermeneutics, Politics, and the History of Religions: The Conteested Legacies of Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

4 Mircea Eliade, "Nostalgia for Paradise in the Primitive Traditions," in *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 59–72, see also, inter alia, "Sacred Time and Myths," in *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), pp. 68–113, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), "Cosmogonic Myth and 'Sacred History'," and "Paradise and Utopia: Mythical Geography and Eschatology," in *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 72–87 and 88–111, respectively.

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("archaic" in his vocabulary) were as unified and coherent as Eliade would have it. Second, I doubt that the myths of such societies were as stable or stabilizing as he assumed. Third, although cosmogonies surely help provide a sense of meaning, I suspect they have produced less coherence and unity than he suggested. Rather, it seems to me that within a human collective of any size there is always some mixture of agreement and disagreement as regards basic principles. In relation to myths of creation, this usually manifests itself as vague agreement about the general shape of the narrative and disagreements (sometimes quite sharp) regarding important details. As a result, multiple variants circulate and compete with each other, each one attracting those adherents who – for their own contingent reasons – prefer its treatment of those points they consider most significant. Such unity as the group achieves is grounded not in a unified and unifying narrative (of which they are both re-producers and product), but in competition among rival institutions and factions over the way the story is told, circulated and received.

2

By way of example, consider several related cosmogonies of ancient Iran, where a particularly concise variant provides a convenient point of departure. This is the account Darius the Great (r. 521–486 BCE) placed at the head of four different inscriptions.[5]

> A great god is the Wise Lord, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king: one king over many, one commander over many.[6]

5 The most meticulous philological study of the Achaemenid cosmogonies is Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les créations d'Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58. I have also considered the central ideological importance of these myths in *Religion, Empire, and Torture: The Case of Achaemenian Persia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) and *"Happiness for Mankind": Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Louvain: Peeters, Acta Iranica, vol. 53, 2012). See also Ugo Bianchi, "Dieu créateur et vision universaliste: Le cas de l'empire achéménide," in Philippe Gignoux, ed., *La commémoration. Colloque du centenaire de la section des sciences religieuses de l'école pratique des hautes études* (Louvain: Peeters, 1988), pp. 191–200.

6 DNa §1: *baga vazṛka Auramazdā, haya imām būmīm adā, haya avam asmānam adā, haya martiyam adā, haya šiyātim adā martiyahyā, haya Dārayavaum xšāyaϑiyam akunauš, aiva parūnām xšāyaϑiyam, aiva parūnām framātāram*. The same text appears at DSf, and DE and with minor variation (the imperfect *adadā*, in place of the aorist *adā*) at DSe §1.

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Although brief, this text is hardly simple; rather, it makes five points with remarkable economy. First, all creation originates with the Wise Lord (*Ahura Mazdā*) and reflects his essential goodness. Second, creation occurs in two distinct phases and takes two different forms. Initially, the Wise Lord brought earth, sky, humanity, and happiness into existence and his creative action is described by the solemn verb *dā-* ("to establish, institute, set in place for the first time"), which is reserved for the supreme deity in his capacity as Creator.[7] At a later date – 521 BCE to be precise – this god undertook a lesser creative act when he made Darius king, for which the text employs the more common verb *kar-* ("to make, build, do"), which also takes human actors as its subject. Putting Darius on the throne is thus identified as a creation of sorts, but of a lower order than the original establishment of heaven, earth, humanity, and the conditions for human thriving. Third, all of the original creations are defined as unities, for they are consistently named in the singular. Just as there is only one heaven and one earth, so too there is only one mankind (*martiya*), although it is not clear if this means that all members of the human race were initially joined in harmony or, alternatively, if the species first came into being in one prototypical member. Unity and harmony were also essential to the "happiness" (*šiyāti*, once again in the singular) God created for mankind: an absolute bliss marked by peace, calm, and freedom from friction or strife.[8] Fourth, this original state of perfection must have been lost some time after the original creation. Other inscriptions supply missing parts of the story, telling how "the Lie" (*Drauga*) – source of all confusion, conflict, and evil – entered existence, shattered unity (there being only one truth, but many lies), and spread rapidly in the years before Darius became king.[9] Fifth, the Wise Lord made Darius king in response to this crisis, charging him to restore tranquility, harmony and happiness by overcoming the Lie. The inscriptions speak the conviction that

7 On the semantics of this verb, see Jean Kellens, "Ahura Mazda n'est pas un dieu créateur," in C.-H. de Fouchécour and Ph. Gignoux, eds., *Études irano-aryennes offertes à Gilbert Lazard* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1989), pp. 217–28.

8 Regarding this crucially important term, see the various discussions of Jean Kellens, "Sur un parallèle inverse à l'inscription des '*daiva*'," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 40 (1969): 209–13, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Vieux-perse *šiyāti*," in Jean Kellens, ed., *La religion iranienne à l'époque Achéménide* (Ghent: Iranica Antiqua, Supplément 5, 1991), pp. 13–21, and Andrea Piras, "A proposito di antico-persiano *šiyāti*," *Studi Orientali e Linguistici* 5 (1994–95): 91–97.

9 The crucial passage is DB §§10–14. On "the Lie" as a central construct of Indo-Iranian religion, particularly important to Achaemenid ideology, see Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Truth and Deception in Ancient Iran," in Carlo G. Cereti and Farrokh Vajifdar, eds., *Ataš-e Dorun: The Fire Within. Jamshid Soroush Sorouschian Commemorative Volume* (n.p.: Mehrborzin Soroushian, 2003), pp. 383–434.

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although perfection has not yet been reestablished, the institution of ideal kingship – as represented by Darius – leads the divinely authorized struggle to make good prevail over evil, truth over falsehood, and unity over multiplicity. Toward this end, the text concludes by naming Darius "one king over many, one commander over many" (*aiam parūnām xšāyaϑiyam, aiam parūnām framātāram*).

If one had to identify "the" Achaemenid cosmogony, this would surely be it. Not only did Darius repeat this account multiple times verbatim, so did his successors.[10] There are also several variants on the formula, most of which are relatively minor.[11] One, however, is fairly dramatic. This occurs at Susa, the first and most magnificent palace Darius built after taking the throne. There, we can observe three major changes in the creation account. First, the solemn verb *dā-* is everywhere replaced by the common verb *kar-*. Second, instead of creating heaven and earth, the Wise Lord begins by making "a wonder" (*fraša*). This same word is used repeatedly in an ideology specific to Susa and in all other occurences, it denotes the palace Darius "made" or "built" (*kar-*) there.[12] Several inscriptions describe this project at length, detailing how he charged the most skilled craftsmen from all provinces of the empire to work the most precious substances of their home regions into a microcosmic "wonder," within which the perfect unity of creation was spectacularly restored.[13] Here, it is also worth noting that the text describes the second phase of the Wise Lord's activity in such a way that Darius never appears as the object, but only as subject of the verb *kar-*, thus implying a set of relations in which he is parallel – and not subordinate – to the Wise Lord. The cosmogonic discourse of Susa thus casts Darius not as a salvific figure made king by the Creator, but as a Creator himself (Table 2.1).[14]

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10 To date, thirteen inscriptions by later Achaemenid kings have been recovered that contain a version of the cosmogonic myth. Nine of these make only one alteration in the text we have been considering, by replacing the name of Darius with that of the reigning monarch (XPa §1, XPb §1, XPc §1, XPd §1, XPf §1, XPh §1, A^1Pa, D^2Ha §1, A^3Pa §1).

11 Thus, three inscriptions describe the Wise Lord as "greatest of the gods" (XE = XV = A^2Hc), two dwell on the king's god-given physical and intellectual abilities (DNb §1 = XPl §1), and one describes the kingdom itself as "great, with good horses, with good people" (DZc §1).

12 Cf. DSa §2, DSf §4, DSj §3, DSo, and DSz §14.

13 These are the "foundation texts" at Susa, DSf and DSaa, the former of which concludes "In Susa a great wonder was ordered. A great wonder was made." *Çūšāyā paru frašam framātam paru frašam kṛtam*.

14 I have treated the vocabulary of the Susa variant and its wide-ranging implications in *"Happiness for Mankind"*, pp. 357–74 and *Religion, Empire, and Torture*, op cit., pp. 67–81.

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TABLE 2.1 Variant on Darius's cosmogonic account from Susa and its relation to the way the palace at Susa was theorized

Standard formula	*DSs §1*	*DSj §3*	*DSf §4*
A great god is the Wise Lord, who created this earth, who created that sky,	A great god is the Wise Lord, who makes a wonder on this earth,	By the Wise Lord's will, for him who should see this palace, may it seem to all a wonder made by me.	In Susa a great wonder was commanded. A great wonder was made.
who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king:	who makes mankind on this earth, who makes happiness for mankind, who makes good horses and good chariots. On me he bestowed them.		
one king over many, one commander over many.			
	May the Wise Lord protect me and what has been made by me.[a]	May the Wise Lord protect me and my land/people.[b]	May the Wise Lord protect me and Vištāspa, who is my father, and my land/people.[c]

a DSs §1: *baga vazṛka Auramazdā haya frašam ahyāyā būmiyā kunaụti, haya martiyam ahyāyā būmiyā kunaụti, haya šiyātim kunaụti martiyahyā, haya uvaspā uraϑacā kunaụti. manā haụdiš frābara mām Auramazdā pātu utā tayamaị kṛtam.*

b DSj §3: *vašnā AMhā haya ima hadiš vaịnāti taya manā kṛtam visahyā frašam ϑadayāti. mām AM pātu utamaị DHum.*

c DSf §4: *Çušāyā paru frašam framātam paru frašam kṛtam mām Auramazdā pātu utā Vištāspam haya manā pitā utamai DHum.* Note that Darius's request that his father be blessed indicates that the latter was still living when this inscription was written, permitting one to date it very early in Darius's reign.

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3

The earlier Zoroastrian literature (i.e. that of the Avesta) contains several creation accounts, most of which are fairly brief, and the later literature in Pahlavi treats the topic at length.[15] Ideally, one would like to treat this evidence in detail and explore its many variants, but space won't permit that. As a poor substitute, let me follow a relatively late account, that of the *Greater Bundahišn* (9th century CE), which builds on all prior variants to produce a definitive account. My goal here is not to treat this complex text *in extenso*, but to summarize the ways Zoroastrian cosmogonies most resemble the Achaemenid texts we've just considered, then to isolate their chief point of difference.

Like the royal inscriptions, Zoroastrian scriptures make the Wise Lord uniquely responsible for the original acts of material creation, which reflect his absolute goodness. Here also he is said to have produced seriatim a small number of primordial entities, starting with inanimate creations, then adding an equal number of animate beings. Although the earlier Avestan texts vary regarding the number and identity of these original creations, a fairly standard list gradually emerged, in which the Wise Lord made Sky, Water, Earth, Plant, Animal, and Human, in that order.[16] The set thus includes three of the four items in the Achaemenid variants (Table 2.2).

15 On Zoroastrian ideas regarding creations, see James Darmesteter, "Les cosmogonies aryennes," in his *Essais orientaux* (Paris: A. Lévy, 1883), pp. 135–207, H.S. Nyberg, "Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes," *Journal asiatique* 214 (1929): 193–310 and 219 (1931): 1–134 and 193–244, Marijan Molé, "La naissance du monde dan l'Iran préislamique," in *La naissance du monde* (Paris: Sources orientales, 1959), pp. 299–328, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Iranische Kosmogonien," in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplement IX (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1962), pp. 158–89, Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Vol. I: The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 130–46, Shaul Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation. Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994), pp. 5–26, and Anders Hultgård, "Mythe et histoire dans l'Iran ancien: cosmogonie et l'histoire du monde," in *Recurrent Patterns in Iranian Religion* (Paris: Studia Iranica, 1992), pp. 37–56. The most extensive primary source is the *Greater Bundahišn*, which drew its materials from the lost *Dāmdād* and *Cihrdād Nasks* of the Sassanian Avesta. Most scholarly discussions have based themselves primarily on this text.

16 The set first appears in *Yasna* 37.1 and becomes fairly standard thereafter. At times, fire is added as a seventh original creation enjoying a particularly privileged position standing somehow outside and above the rest of the list.

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TABLE 2.2 Order in which the Wise Lord established his primordial creations, according to Achaemenid and Zoroastrian cosmogonic accounts

	Achaemenid inscriptions	*Zoroastrian texts*
Inanimate	Earth	Sky
		Water
	Sky	Earth
Animate		Plant
		Animal
	Mankind	Human
	Happiness for Mankind	

Sometimes the Avestan variants name all creations in the singular and sometimes they use the plural for plants, waters, and heavenly bodies.[17] In contrast, the Pahlavi texts consistently use the singular for all creations and the more extensive variants describe how the first plant, animal, and human each encompassed within their individual body all the good qualities distributed to the various species of flora, fauna, and humanity when these later came into being.

Primordial perfection thus featured unity, with integrity of body and spirit, such that the original creatures were free of vice, disease, suffering, and death. All of this was lost, however, when the Evil Spirit (Avestan *Aŋra Mainyu*, Pahlavi *Ahriman*), assaulted the good creation.[18] Some texts treat this assault in detail,

17 The four passages in the Older Avesta that treat cosmogony consistently treat waters, plants, and heavenly bodies in the plural, while naming sky and the primordial animal in the singular and leaving humanity unmentioned, except by implication (*Yasna* 37.1, 44.3–6, 48.5–6, and 51.7). The Younger Avesta begins referring to all the original creations in the singular and does so in a slight majority of the passages that have cosmogonic reference (*Yasna* 19.2, 19.4, 19.8, Yašt 13.28, 13.86, *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.35, and *Visprad* 7.4; the plural is retained at *Yasna* 5.1, 6.11, 17.12, 18.1, and 65.15). I have treated this question more fully in "Implications of Grammatical Number in Iranian Mythology of Vegetation," in Éric Pirart, Philippe Swennen, and Xavier Tremblay, eds., *Zarathushtra entre l'Inde et l'Iran: Études indo-iraniennes et indo-européennes offertes à Jean Kellens* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2009), pp. 177–88, reprinted in *Happiness for Mankind*, op cit., pp. 89–104.

18 "The Lie" is closely associated with the Evil Spirit in Zoroastrian scriptures, although it is difficult to establish the precise nature of their relation. In at least one Pahlavi variant – that of *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36 – the Wise Lord's adversary is consistently named "the Lie" (Pahl. *druz*), rather than "the Evil Spirit" (*Ahriman*). In other variants the Lie is a prime aspect, adjutant, or extension of Ahriman, enjoying a privileged position among all the demonic powers. Recent scholarship has emphasized the extent to which Ahriman and

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describing how Ahriman conjured an army of demons and vermin that helped him attack each of the Wise Lord's creatures, many against one, killing the primordial plant, animal, and human in sequence.[19] Death was not the end, however, for the dying creatures fell apart – just as corpses now decompose – and the fragments of their bodies gave rise to the myriad species of plants, animals, and humans, all of which contain some portions of good, some portions of evil, and the capacity to multiply (a mixed blessing that replaces individual immortality with continuity of the species). Original perfection thus gave way to a mixture of good and evil, just as shattered unity became multiplicity, with all its possibilities for confusion and conflict.

In this situation, the Wise Lord – who is omniscient, but not omnipotent – looks forward to the day when the Evil Spirit will be vanquished and primordial perfection restored. That project involves suppression of liars, malefactors, and destructive forces of every sort. Up to this point, the Zoroastrian and Achaemenid sources are in close accord, but they differ sharply on the means toward their desired end. As we have seen, Achaemenid inscriptions depicted the king as God's chosen agent, who was expected to suppress rebels and enemies (associated with the Lie), proclaim truth, impose law, unite all peoples under his rule, and build wondrous palaces (also gardens) where perfect happiness would re-emerge and then radiate through creation. In contrast, the Zoroastrian scriptures make Zarathuštra the hero of their story, chosen by the Wise Lord to help righteous humans rout the Evil Spirit by cultivating good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, the last of which include both ritual and ethical action. From this perspective, unity and harmony are to be achieved by the performance of sacrifice, purification, and the recitation of sacred mantras, rather than military conquest and the administration of justice. Accordingly, it is priests, not kings, who lead the way.

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his hordes were identified with corrosive non-being. Along these lines, see Shaul Shaked, "Some Notes on Ahriman, the Evil Spirit, and his Creation," in E.E. Urbach et al., eds., *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 227–34, Jes P. Asumssen, "Some Remarks on Sasanian Demonology," in *Commémoration Cyrus. Actes du Congrès de Shiraz* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 236–41, Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "The Non-Existence of Ahreman and the Mixture (*gumēzišn*) of Good and Evil," in *K.R. Cama Oriental Institute. Second International Congress Proceedings* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1996), pp. 79–95, and Antonio Panaino, "A Few Remarks on the Zoroastrian Conception of the Status of Angra Mainyu and of the Daēvas," *Res Orientales* 13 (2001): 99–107.

19 Most extensive in its treatment of this theme is the *Greater Bundahišn* 1–7. Other important variants include *Zād Spram* 1–3, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 46, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8, and *Dēnkard* 3.162.

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Originally, the Zoroastrian cosmogonies came from eastern Iran, while the Achaemenid variants were from the southwest. One should also consider the Scythians, Iranians of the north, whose creation myth comes down to us in a variant preserved by Herodotus.[20]

> The Scythians say they are the youngest of all peoples and this is how it came to be so. A first man was born in this country, which was uninhabited. His name was Targitaos. The parents of this Targitaos, they say – recounting things that aren't credible to me – were Zeus and the daughter of the river Borysthenes. This was the parentage from which Targitaos was born and he had three sons: Lipoxais, Arpoxais, and Kolaxais, the youngest. In the time of their reign, golden objects fell from the sky: a plow, a yoke, a Scythian sword, and a cup fell to Scythia. Seeing these first, the oldest went close, planning to take them, but as he approached, the gold burst into flame. When he had departed, the second son approached the gold, and it flared up again. And after the flaming gold had repelled them, the fire was extinguished at the approach of the third and youngest son, and he carried it off as his own. The older brothers then accepted that the kingship be handed over to the youngest.[21]

20 Regarding this narrative, see Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iranien*s (Uppsala: Appelberg, 1918–34) 1:137–43, Émile Benveniste, "Traditions indo-iraniens sur les classes sociales," *Journal asiatique* 230 (1938): 534–37, W. Brandenstein, "Die Abstammungssagen der Skythen," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 52 (1953–55): 183–211, Georges Dumézil, *Romans de Scythie et alentours* (Paris: Payot, 1978), pp. 171–203, François Cornillot, "De Skythès à Kolaxais," *Studia Iranica* 10 (1981): 7–52, and Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 156–58. Note that the Greeks of Olbia also had a variant of this myth, in which Herakles fathered three sons on a serpent-woman and established the means for choosing one of them as the first Scythian king. The stage of unity thus disappears altogether, patrilineal logic construes Scythians as a subordinate offshoot of the Greeks, and Scythian identity proper takes the form of the autochthonous somewhat monstrous (if seductive) female (Herodotus 4.8–10). See further Monica Visintin, "Echidna, Skythes e l'arco di Herakles. Figure della marginalità nella versione greca delle origini degli Sciti, Herodot. 4.8–10," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 45 (2000): 43–81, A.S. Rusyayeva, "Religious Interactions between Olbia and Scythia," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 142 (2007): 93–102, and Bruce Lincoln, *Apples & Oranges: Explorations in, on, and with Comparison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 84–95.

21 Herodotus 4.5: Ὡς δὲ Σκύθαι λέγουσι νεώτατον πάντων ἐθνέων εἶναι τὸ σφέτερον, τοῦτο δὲ γενέσθαι ὧδε. ἄνδρα γενέσθαι πρῶτον ἐν τῇ γῇ ταύτῃ ἐούσῃ ἐρήμῳ τῷ οὔνομα εἶναι Ταργιτάον· τοῦ δὲ Ταργιτάου τοὺτου τοὺς τοκέας λέγουσι εἶναι, ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιστὰ λέγοντες, λέγουσι δ᾽ ὦν,

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The story thus begins with heaven, earth, and water already in place, theorized as the divine beings "Zeus" (= the Scythian deity Papaios, "Daddy") and the daughter of the Borysthenes (= the Dnepr, greatest of Scythian rivers), elsewhere identified as "Earth, whom they consider Zeus's wife."[22] Creation proper follows with the birth of the first man, Targitaos, who makes his appearance in barren, uninhabited space (*en tēi gēi tautēi eousēi erēmōi*) and represents the stage of primordial unity. Fragmentation follows with the birth of his three sons (each of whom will found separate tribes) and the descent of four miraculous objects, each associated with a different social stratum and form of labor (agriculture, herding, warfare, and ritual). Competition for these precious goods follows and there is real possibility of conflict among the brothers. That possibility is obviated, however, when the heavenly gold bestows itself on the third brother, who thereby becomes king. As such, he is entitled to keep all four golden objects as a royal and national sacred treasure, which he must renew annually through sacrifice, thereby securing the welfare and unity of the Scythian people.[23] Once again we find the familiar schema in which an original state of perfect unity is lost, after which a leader is divinely chosen to restore as much unity as possible. Regarding the identity of that agent, however, there is disagreement. Achaemenians opted for kings and Zoroastrians for priests, while Scythians settled on kings who sacrifice, apparently fusing the two functions.

Δία τε καὶ Βορυσθένεος τοῦ ποταμοῦ θυγατέρα. γένεος μὲν τοιούτου δή τινος γενέσθαι τὸν Ταργιτάον, τούτου δὲ γενέσθαι παῖδας τρεῖς, Λιπόξαϊν καὶ Ἀρπόξαϊν καὶ νεώτατον Κολάξαϊν. ἐπὶ τούτων ἀρχόντων ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ φερόμενα χρύσεα ποιήματα, ἄροτρόν τε καὶ ζυγὸν καὶ σάγαριν καὶ φιάλην, πεσεῖν ἐς τὴν Σκυθικήν· καὶ τῶν ἰδόντα πρῶτον τὸν πρεσβύτατον ἅσσον ἰέναι βουλόμενον αὐτὰ λαβεῖν, τὸν δὲ χρυσὸν ἐπιόντος καίεσθαι· ἀπαλλαχθέντος δὲ τούτου προσιέναι τὸν δεύτερον καὶ τὸν αὖτις ταὐτὰ ποιέειν. Τοὺς μὲν δὴ καιόμενον τὸν χρυσὸν ἀπώσασται, τρίτῳ δὲ τῷ νεωτάτῳ ἐπελθόντι κατασβῆναι, καὶ μιν ἐκεῖνον κομίσαι ἐς ἑωυτοῦ· καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους ἀδελφεοὺς πρὸς ταῦτα συγγνόντας τὴν βασιληίην πᾶσαν παραδοῦναι τῷ νεωτάτῳ.

22 Herodotus 4.59: Θεοὺς μὲν μούνους τούσδε ἱλάσκονται, Ἱστίην μὲν μάλιστα, ἐπὶ δὲ Δία τε καὶ Γῆν, νομίζοντες τὴν Γῆν τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι γυναῖκα … Ζεὺς δὲ ὀρθότατα κατὰ γνώμην γε τὴν ἐμὴν καλεόμενος Παπαῖος, Γῆ δὲ Ἀπία. Although the Greeks identify Gē ("Earth") with the Scythian Api, the name of the latter identifies her as connected with, derived from, or born of the waters (cf. Avestan *āp-*). This is consistent with Herodotus 4.5, which makes Zeus's wife "daughter of the Borysthenes." See further, Manfred Mayrhofer, *Einiges zu den Skythen, ihrer Sprache, ihrem Nachleben* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), p. 9 and Helmut Humbach, "Scytho-Sarmatica," *Die Welt der Slaven* 5 (1960): 324.

23 Herodotus 4.7: τὸν δὲ χρυσὸν τοῦτον τὸν ἱρον φυλάσσουσι οἱ βασιλέες ἐς τὰ μάλιστα καὶ θυσίῃσι μεγάλῃσι ἱλασκόμενοι μετέρχονται ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος. The project of transforming multiplicity into unity is also evident in the census undertaken by the king, who gathered one arrowhead from every Scythian, then melted these down and cast them into a colossal bronze vessel manifesting the size and strength of his people as a whole. (Herodotus 4.81).

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Both the Achaemenian and the Scythian creation accounts culminate in the installation of a first king, who is the hero of the story. Recognizing this prompts us to consider Zoroastrian myths of the first king.[24]

> Zarathuštra asked the Wise Lord: "Wise Lord, with whom among mortals did you first converse? Other than me, to whom did you reveal the religion that is Ahuric and Zoroastrian?"
>
> The Wise Lord answered: "With fair Yima of good pastures. To him I first revealed the religion that is Ahuric and Zoroastrian. I said to him: 'Get ready, fair Yima, to be marked by my religion and to bear it forth.' Then fair Yima gave me this response: 'I am neither created, nor prepared to be marked by the religion or bear it forth.' Then I said to him: 'Yima, if you are not ready, to be marked by my religion and bear it forth, then make my creatures thrive, make my creatures flourish, prepare to be protector and guardian and supervisor of the creatures.' Then fair Yima gave me this response: 'I will make your creatures thrive, I will make your creatures flourish, I am prepared to be protector and guardian and supervisor of the creatures. Let there be no cold wind in my kingdom, nor a hot one, nor disease, nor death.'"[25]

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24 As Hermann Güntert, *Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923), pp. 315–94 and Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et premier roi dans l'historie légendaire des iraniens. Vol II: Jim* (Uppsala: Appelberg, 1934) demonstrated, Iranian Yima derives from an extremely old Indo-European mythic figure of the first man, first king, and first mortal. Iranian mythology collected several other first king figures and reorganized them in a series, within which Yima remained the most important of all, but was displaced from sequential primacy. More recent literature includes Bruce Lincoln, *Priests, Warriors, and Cattle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 67–95, Helmut Humbach, "Yama/Yima/Jamšēd, King of Paradise of the Iranians," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 26 (2002): 68–77, idem, "Yima/Jamšēd," in *Varia Iranica* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2004), pp. 45–58, Antonio Panaino, "Philologia Avestica VI: The Widewdad Fragment about the Millennium of Yima," *Varia Iranica*, pp. 19–33, and Audrey Tzatourian, *Yima: Structure de la pensée religieuse en Iran ancien* (Paris: Thèse de Doctorat, École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2010).

25 *Vīdaēuudāt* 2.1–5: *pərəsat Zaraϑuštrō ahurəm mazdąm: ahura mazda mainiiō spəništa dātarə gaēϑanąm astuuaitinąm ašāum, kahmāi paoiriiō mašiiānąm apərəsə.tūm yō ahurō mazdå aniiō mana yat Zaraϑuštrāi. kahmāi fradaēsaiiō daēnąm yąm āhūirīm zaraϑuštrīm. āat mraot ahurō mazdå: Yimāi srīrāi huuąϑβāi, ašāum zaraϑuštra, ahmāi paoiriiō mašiiānąm apərəse azəm yō ahurō mazdå: aniiō ϑβat yat Zaraϑuštrāt ahmāi fradaēsaēm daēnąm yąm āhūirīm zaraϑuštrīm. āat hē mraom, Zaraϑuštra, azəm yō ahurō mazdå: vīsaŋha mē yima srīra vīuuaŋhana mərətō bərətaca daēnaiiāi. āat mē aēm paitiiaoxta Yimō srīrō, Zaraϑuštra: nōit dātō ahmi nōit cistō mərətō bərətaca daēnaiiāi. āat hē mraom*

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The story is as instructive as it is unexpected. Initially, the Wise Lord sought to make Yima founder of the Good Religion, but the latter refused. Accordingly, he became first king, charged with protection of the Wise Lord's creation and in this capacity he presided over an ideal state of existence, in which suffering and evil were unknown. Other texts describe him as offering exemplary sacrifices that secured paradisal conditions – absence of death, old age, hunger and thirst, perfect climate, unity of all beings under his rule, and the powerlessness of demons – for the duration of his kingship, which lasted a thousand years.[26] Ultimately, however, this Golden Age ended under circumstances we find familiar.

> Royal charisma (*xᵛarənah*) accompanied Yima for the long time he ruled over the seven-partite earth, over demons, mortals, magicians, witches, tyrants, Kavis and Karapans. Yima carried off from the demons both power and profit, both herds and pastures, both contentment and fame. Under his rule both food and drink were inexhaustible, men and cattle were undying, water and plants were not threatened by dryness. Under his rule there was neither heat, nor cold, nor old age, nor death, nor demon-created envy, all because of non-lying until he began to contemplate lying, untruthful speech. When he was seen beginning to contemplate this lying, untruthful speech, the royal charisma departed from him in the form of a bird. Deprived of happiness, Yima wandered about. Having fallen because of a bad mind, he hid himself on the earth.[27]

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zaraϑuštra, azəm yō ahurō mazdå: yezi mē yima nōit vīuuīse mərətō bərətaca daēnaiiāi, āat mē gaēϑå frāδaiia āat mē gaēϑå varəδaiia āat mē vīsāi gaēϑanąm ϑrātāca harətāca aiβiiāxštaca. āat mē aēm paitiiaoxta yimō srīrō, Zaraϑuštra: azəm tē gaēϑå fraδaiieni, azəm tē gaēϑå varəδaiieni, azəm tē vīsāne gaēϑanąm ϑrātāca harətāca aiβiiāxštaca. nōit mana xšaϑre buuat aotō vātō, nōit garəmō, nōit axtīš, nōit mahrkō. In the interests of providing a clear and readable text, I have eliminated some of the passage's formulaic repetitions in my translation.

26 That Yima's rule lasted a millennium is specified at *Yašt* 9.10 and 17.30. Other paradisal aspects of his reign also figure in *Vīdaēuudāt* 2.1–5, *Yasna* 9.4–5, *Yašt* 5.25–27, 9.8–11, 15.15–17, 17.28–31, and 19.31–34.

27 *Yašt* 19.30–33: *uγrəm kauuaēm xᵛarənō mazdaδātəm yazamaide … yat upaŋhacat yim yiməm xšaētəm huuąϑβəm darəγəmcit aipi zruuānəm yat xšaiiata paiti būmīm haptaiϑiiąm daēuuanąm mašiiānąmca yāϑβąm pairikanąmca sāϑrąm kaoiiąm karafnąmca yō uzbarat haca daēuuaēibiiō uiie ištišca saokāca uiie fšaonišca vąϑβāca uiie ϑrafšca frasastišca yeŋhe xšaϑrāδa xᵛairiiəm tū astu uiie xšaϑre ajiiamne amarəšanta pasu.vīra aŋhaošəmne āpa.uruuaire. yeŋhe xšaϑrāδa nōit aotəm åŋha nōit garəməm nōit zauruua åŋha nōit mərəiϑiiuš nōit araskō daēuuō.dātō ⁺parō anādruxtōit para ahmāt yat hīm aēm draoγəm vācim aŋhaiϑīm cinmāne paiti.barata. āat yat hīm aēm draoγəm vācim aŋhaiϑīm cinmāne paiti.barata vaēnəmnəm ahmat haca xᵛarənō mərəγahe kəhrpa frašusat auuaēnō xᵛarənō*

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As in the Achaemenid inscriptions, the situation of primordial perfection, characterized by abundance, contentment, immortality, and perfect peace is summarized under the term "happiness" (Old Persian *šiyāti*, Avestan *šyāti* < √*šyā-* "to be happy, utterly at peace"), for after his fall, Yima is described as *a-šātō* "deprived of happiness."[28] And once again, it is the Lie's advent that puts an end to the ideal condition. Fragmentation then follows, as the royal charisma splits into three portions,[29] while Yima himself is killed and bodily dismembered.[30] One last text describes the lie Yima told, which brings us back to the theme of creation.

> Zarathuštra also asked this of the Wise Lord: "What was the worst thing Yima did to the world?"
>
> The Wise Lord said: "When I revealed the Religion to him, he did not accept it."
>
> Yima's soul cried out to Zarathuštra: "Beware and do not listen to the speech of demons. Accept the Religion, for when the Wise Lord speaks to you, that is the most excellent of times. He first revealed it to me and when I should have been wiser, I stood on the path of the demons and said that I had created all the creatures in the spiritual and material creation. And by that lie which I spoke, royal charisma and sovereignty were stolen from me and my body was delivered to destruction at the hands of the demons."[31]

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fraēštō yō yimō xšaētō huuąϑβō brāsat yimō ašātō dəuš.manahiiāica hō stərətō nidārat upairi ząm. Once again I have eliminated some forumlaic and repetitive phrases from the translation. I have also adopted the emendation proposed by Helmut Humbach and Pallan R. Ichaporia, *Zamyād Yasht. Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta: Text, Translation, Commentary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998), p. 109, reading *⁺parō anādruxtōit* in place of *⁺para anādruxtōit*.

28 Elsewhere it is stated that "happiness" (*šāti*) will be restored to the souls of the righteous immediately after death (*Hādōxt Nask* 2.2).

29 *Yašt* 19.35–44.

30 *Yašt* 19.46. On the cosmogonic significance of the verb "to cut into pieces" (Avestan *karət-* Pahlavi *kirrenidan*), see Chapter 11.

31 *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 31.C1–C6: *Zarduxšt ēn-iz pursīd az Ohrmazd kū Jam pad gēhān čē wattar kard. Ohrmazd guft kū ka-m dēn awiš nimūd nē padīrift. ruwān ī Jam be ō Zarduxšt wāng kard kū pahrēz saxwan ī dēwān ma ašnaw ud dēn be padīr čē ēd zamān weh ud pāšom ⁺ka ō tō gōwēd Ohrmazd. čē-š nazdist be ō man nimūd ud ⁺ka dānāgtar abāyist būd ō rāh ī dēwān estād hom. u-m harw dām ud dahišn ī mēnōg ud gētīg guft kū man dād. pad ān drō ī-m guft man xwarrah ud xwadāyīh aziš appār būd u-m tan be ō wišōbišn ī dast ī dēwān mad*. The same text contains a longer variant of this narrative at 31.A8–A10. Cf. also *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 38.19–20.

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This passage is effectively a myth about a myth or, to put it differently, a mythic variant that makes another variant the object of its critique. Thus, it maintains that Yima's famous lie was nothing other than a false version of the cosmogony in which he claimed that he, as king, was responsible for the creation. As a result, his charisma left him, which is to say, the arrogant overreaching of the story he told cost him his legitimacy, divine favor, and kingship. In that instant, his perfection and that of his Golden Age fell apart, giving rise to the world as we know it, characterized by death, disease, wars, demons, lying kings, propaganda, and advertising. We should note, however, that Yima's inflated sense of himself as creator was only slightly more hybristic than the Susan portrayal of Darius as having made a wonder (*fraša*) comparable to God's creation of heaven and earth.

Had Yima honored the Wise Lord's original intention, things presumably would have been different, for the Good Religion would have guarded him against falsehood. Instead, he chose to become king and in that capacity, he did the best any king can do, maintaining perfection for a millennial reign. The story suggests, however, that by virtue of their very nature, kings inevitably lie and this has catastrophic consequences for themselves, their people, and the world in general. Accordingly, Yima's failings usher in the ambiguous state of multiplicity, mixture, and trouble, where things can only be set right by establishment of the Good Religion. This is where Zarathuštra enters the picture, along with the priestly institutions, teachings, practices, and texts he is said to have founded. The Yima myth thus inverts the conclusion of the Achaemenid and Scythian variants, turning a celebration of kingship into a critique. For instead of construing the first king as solution to the problems of a post-paradisal world, the Avesta makes Yima – and *a fortiori*, kings in general – the source of the problem (Table 2.3).

6

What these variants share is nostalgia for an ideal past they associate with the original acts of creation. Coupled with this is their conviction that in a flawed world, one must struggle to restore the paradisal state. The future they anticipate thus mirrors the past they imagine, while both of these represent the temporal displacement of their desires. The variants differ, however, on one key question: in the present moment, who should take charge? Whose methods, values, institutions, and practices ought shape the (purportedly) restorative mission? Who can represent themselves as God's chosen instrument of salvation? Not surprisingly, royal texts favor kings and religious scriptures favor

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TABLE 2.3 Iranian cosmogonies, their structure and implications

	Achaemenid	*Scythian*	*Zoroastrian*	*Yima myth*
Original phase of creation	Wise Lord makes earth, sky, mankind, happiness	Heaven, earth, and water combine to produce first man	Wise Lord makes sky, water, earth, plant, animal, human	Wise Lord offers the Good Religion to Yima, but he declines it
Nature of original creations	Perfect in their unity, peace, immortality, etc.	Perfect in unity	Perfect in their unity, peace, immortality, etc.	Perfect reign; unity, peace, immortality, etc.
Advent of evil	Entrance and spread of the Lie		Assault of the Evil Spirit	Yima speaks the first lie, claiming to be creator
Fragmentation	Mankind divided into national and other groups; wars, rebellions, and conflicts	First man has three sons; four golden objects descend from heaven	Primordial plant, animal, and human killed; bodies devolve into myriad species	Royal charisma breaks in three parts; Yima is killed and dismembered
Other losses	Loss of happiness		Loss of immortality	Loss of immortality and happiness
Response	Wise Lord makes Darius king	Golden objects make Kolaxais first king	Wise Lord teaches the Good Religion to Zarathuštra	Wise Lord teaches the Good Religion to Zarathuštra; Yima urges Zarathuštra to accept it
Agents and means to restore perfection	Kings unite humanity by conquest, diplomacy, law, etc.	Kings preserve gold objects and sacrifice for them	Priests sacrifice, purify, foster good thought, speech, and action	Priests replace kings as the Wise Lord's chosen, perform sacrifice, purification, and teach the doctrine

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priests, one priestly variant being shrewdly designed to discredit the claims of kings. And indeed, the question of whether priests or kings are better suited to lead resonates through Iranian history down to the Islamic Republic.

The broader point is not limited to Iran, however. Returning to Eliot and Eliade, we note how their distaste for a present plagued by secularization, individualism, liberalism, and disunity led them to long for an era when the story of creation and other myths provided sacred meaning, orienting tradition, and cultural coherence. Accordingly, both men labored to produce a future consonant with the endangered ideals they associated with the past. On the question of who should lead that struggle they differed in predictable, if revealing and amusing ways, for Eliot favored poets, Eliade historians of religions. Apparently, even those who celebrate the unifying power myth had in the past tell their story in variants that reflect – and advance – their particular, contingent, and divisive interests in the present.

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CHAPTER 3

The Cosmo-Logic of Persian Demonology

1

Although demonology was – and remains – a major part of many religions and cultures, the topic has received less scholarly attention than one might expect.[1] The bases of demonological discourse having been discredited in the Enlightenment, it would seem the topic has been drained of all save antiquarian interest. With few exceptions, most studies are condescending in tone and superficial in their engagement, as if reflecting residual anxiety that such foolishness might be contagious or – a less magical construction of the same dynamic – that evincing too much interest can damage one's reputation.[2]

As the result of such skittishness, our understanding of many cultures and historic eras remains impoverished, for some of the best minds of numerous peoples were devoted to demonology. However much we may reject the foundational assumptions of this discourse, this hardly forces the conclusion that speculation on the demonic is necessarily naïve, "superstitious," or infantile. As a working hypothesis, I assume that the demonological components of any religion are no less intelligent than those of its other constituent parts and (therefore) deserve equally serious study.

Let me suggest that where it thrives, demonology constitutes something like a unified field theory of what we treat separately under the rubrics of bacteriology, epidemiology, toxicology, teratology, criminology, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and others, for it is an unflinching attempt to name, comprehend, and

1 This chapter was originally published in Bruce Lincoln, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 31–42.

2 European demonology has begun to receive more serious and more respectful attention in recent years, as in such works as Alain Boureau, *Satan the Heretic: The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Armando Maggi, *In the Company of Demons: Unnatural Beings, Love, and Identity in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), Sophie Houdard, *Les sciences du diable. Quatre discours sur la sorcellerie, XV^e–XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992), and Isabel Grübel, *Die Hierarchie der Teufel: Studien zum christlichen Teufelsbild und zur Allegorisierung des Bösen in Theologie, Literatur und Kunst zwischen Frühmittelalter und Gegenreformation* (Munich: Tuduv, 1991).

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defend against all that threatens, frightens, and harms us. While such a project has clear import for questions of ethics, it goes well beyond that relatively narrow domain, stretching into physics, metaphysics, cosmology and ontology, as I hope to show by examining a reasonably well-attested and historically important example, that of pre-Islamic (or: Mazdaean) Iran.[3]

2

Mazdaean literature (i.e. Zoroastrian texts plus Achaemenian royal inscriptions, which may or may not be Zoroastrian) on the demonic is large, but diffuse, and the topic permeates virtually all other concerns, as we will ultimately see. To treat this in anything approaching comprehensive fashion goes far beyond my ambitions in this chapter, where, by way of example, I will focus on just a few texts and demons. The first passage of interest is *Yašt* 18.1–2, a hymn of the Avesta where demonology informs the sociopolitical imaginary.

> The Wise Lord said to Zarathuštra: "I created the Aryan royal glory, rich in cattle, with many pastures, with many riches, which conveys much wisdom/spiritual power, which conveys much wealth, suppressor of Appetite, suppressor of bad spirits. It overcomes the extremely deadly Evil Spirit. It overcomes Rage of the bloody club. It overcomes yellow Torpor. It overcomes Ice that makes things rigid. It overcomes the demon Drought. It overcomes the non-Aryan countries.[4]

3 The most thorough prior discussions of Zoroastrian demons and demonology are A.V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), pp. 67–109, Arthur Christensen, *Essai sur la démonologie iranienne* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1941), Carsten Colpe, ed., *Altiranische und Zoroastrische Mythologie* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1974–82), idem, *Iranier – Aramäer – Hebräer – Hellenen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 316–26, 470–72, and 567–602, and Éric Pirart, *Georges Dumézil face aux démons iraniens* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 2007). It goes beyond my ambitions to discuss the powerful influence Persian demonology exercised on Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and other world religions, but it was of massive, enduring importance.

4 *Yašt* 18.1–2: *mraot Ahurō Mazdå Spitamāi Zaraϑuštrāi. azəm daδąm airyanəm xᵛarənō gaomavāitīm pouru.vąϑwəm pouru.ištəm pouru.xᵛarənaŋhəm huš.hąm.bərətəm xraϑwəm huš.hąm.bərətəm šaētəm Āzīm hamaēstārəm dušmainyūm hamaēstārəm. taurvayeiti Aŋrəm Mainyūm pouru.mahrkəm. taurvayeiti Aēšməm xrvīdrūm. taurvayeiti Būšyąstəm zairinəm. taurvayeiti hąm.stərətəm Aēšəm. taurvayeiti daēum Apaošəm. taurvayeiti anairyå daiŋhāyō*. Other translations may be found in James Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* (Paris: Annales du Musée Guimet, 1892–93) 2: 612 and Herman Lommel, *Die Yäšt's des Awesta* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1927), p. 167.

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Most immediately, this passage treats the question of royal legitimacy, which it theorizes as a radiant charisma or "glory" (Avestan *xᵛarənah*) bestowed on rightful kings by God himself. Here and in related texts, this supreme form of legitimate power is construed as a monopoly of the Aryan (= Iranian) people and is said to convey benefits that include wisdom, wealth, and the ability to prevail over a host of menacing evils.[5] Six such menaces are specified by name and non-Aryans are associated with these qualities and dangers. One of these – Rage – suggests that foreigners lack emotional control and are prone to violence, while two of the others – Ice and Drought – associate them with the elemental qualities of cold and dryness, which countless other texts define as antithetical to the flourishing of life, in pointed opposition to the divine, life-sustaining qualities of warmth and moisture.[6] Two others we will consider more thoroughly, but let us begin with the "Evil Spirit," elsewhere called "the demon of demons,"[7] who is the source of all others.

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5 *Yašt* 19 is a hymn devoted to Xᵛarənah and the Aryan monopoly on this power/entity/substance is treated in a mythic narrative recounted at verses 56–64. A related narrative at verses 45–50 describes the struggle between divine and demonic figures for its control. An extensive literature treats the ideology of *xᵛarənah*, including H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), pp. 1–77, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "La Royauté iranienne et le *xᵛarənah*," in Gherardo Gnoli and Adriano V. Rossi, eds., *Iranica* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1979), pp. 375–86, P. Oktor Skjærvø, "*Farnah*: mot mède en vieux-perse," *Bulletin de la Société Linguistique* 78 (1983): 241–59, Bruno Jacobs, "Das *Chvarnah* – Zum Stand der Forschung," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient Gesellschaft* 119 (1987): 215–48, Gherardo Gnoli, "Über das iranische *huarnah-*. Lautliche, morphologische und etymologische Probleme. Zum Stand der Forschung," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 23 (1996): 151–80, idem, "*Xᵛarənah*," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (http://www.iranica.com/newsite/). Three excellent translations of Yašt 19 are available and include extensive commentary: Eric Pirart, *Kayîan Yasn* (*Yasht 19.9–96*). *L'Origine avestique des dynasties mythiques d'Iran* (Barcelona: Editorial Ausa, 1992), Almut Hintze, *Der Zamyād-Yašt. Edition, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1994), Helmut Humbach and Pallan R. Ichaporia, trans., *Zamyād Yasht. Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998).

6 See, for instance, *Dēnkard* 3.157.18, which provides the basis for much medical practice.

> The reason healing of the body is necessary is the ceaseless evil assault of the cold-dry against the body's warm-moist blood, especially if the arrival of adversarial agents is simultaneous, such that the cold cools down the warmth of the body's blood and dryness dries out its moisture.
>
> *ud bēšāz niyāzīh ī tan cim adrang sard hušk ud ēbgatīg petyārag ī ō garm-xwēd xōn tan mādag. kū hamēstārīg rahišnīg ⁺hambudast pad sardīh ī garmīh ī xōn afsārād pad huškīh xwēdīhā hōšēnād.*

7 The Avestan phrases *daēuuanąm daēuuō* ("demon of demons") and *daēuuō daēuuanąm daēuuōtəmō* ("most demonic demon of demons") are used of Aŋra Mainiiu at *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.43, where he appears with a long list of lesser demons. The Pahlavi equivalent (*dēwān dēw*, "demon of demons") occurs at *Dēnkard* 7.2.44 and elsewhere.

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3

Invariably, the Evil Spirit (Avestan *Aŋra Mainyu* = Pahlavi *Ahriman*, also referred to as "the Foul Spirit" [Pahlavi *Gannāg Mēnōg*], "the Adversary" [Pahlavi *Petyārag*], or "the Lie" [Pahlavi *Druz* = Old Persian *Drauga*, Avestan *Drug*]) is set in binary opposition to the Wise Lord (Avestan and Old Persian *Ahura Mazdā* = Pahlavi *Ohrmazd*). These two – and they alone – exist from eternity, occupying opposite quadrants of the cosmos. As the opening passage of the *Bundahišn* specifies, they are diametrically opposed in their nature although they share one important characteristic: neither is omnipotent, each being limited by the existence and power of the other (a point that exculpates the deity from any responsibility for evil).

> It is revealed thus in the good religion: Ohrmazd exists in the highest height, in omniscience and goodness, forever in the light … Ahriman exists in darkness, in ignorance and love of destruction, in the station of the depths.[8]

The contrast between the two is overdetermined and other passages work further binaries into this structure of opposition: light vs. darkness, high vs. low, all-knowing vs. utterly-ignorant, good vs. evil, the benevolent powers of creation vs. malevolent delight in destruction, fragrance vs. stench, hot vs. cold, and moist vs. dry.[9] Mazdaean creation mythology thematizes these contrasts in what one might call the mother of all "outbreak narratives," to use Priscilla Wald's evocative terminology.[10] Although the story has many episodes and variants, let us note that the Wise Lord created an ideal world in which plants,

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8 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.1–3: *pad wēh dēn owōn paydāg ī Ohrmazd bālistīg pad harwisp āgāhīh ud wehīh zamān* [*ī*] *akanārag andar rōšnīh hamē būd.... Ahriman andar tārigīh pad pas-dānišnīh ud zadār-kām*[*ag*]*īh zofr-pāyag būd.* Note that Ahriman's ignorance is of a very particular sort. Most literally it is "after-knowledge" (*pas-dānišnīh*), which is to say that the Evil Spirit never properly anticipates the consequences of the actions it engenders. Impulsively destructive, it sets events in motion that always ironically backfire. Instead of producing the intended destruction, they create a mixed state where creation and destruction temporarily coexist, but which ultimately resolves in favor of creation.

9 Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 26.127 and 27.52: "The Ohrmazdian nature is made manifest as warm and moist and light and fragrant … The nature of Ahriman is made manifest as cold and dry and demonic and dark and stinking." *gōhr ī ohrmazdīg garm ud xwēd ud rōšn ud hubōy ī sabuk andar frāz paydāg.... gōhr ī Ahriman sard ud hušk ud dēwig ud tārīg ud gandag andar frāz paydāg.*

10 Priscilla Wald, *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

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animals, and humans initially enjoyed a perfect existence: without sickness, death, or suffering of any sort, also without the need to eat or reproduce.[11] Jealous, the Evil Spirit launched an attack from his dark depths and to assist in the coming battle he fabricated the first demons. Most texts say he used darkness as the raw material for this act of "miscreation,"[12] and some hint that this was done via masturbation[13] or self-sodomy.[14] One way or another, the demons resembled their maker and material of origin, being not just dark, but "destructive creatures … terrible, foul, and vile in their evil."[15] With these for his troops, weapons, and allies, the Evil Spirit then assaulted the Wise Lord's creatures.

> He set loose Appetite, Deprivation, Distress, Pain, Sickness, Lust, and Torpor on the First Animal and the First Man.[16]

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11 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.4–8:

> Thus, the Creator of the world made the spiritual creation pure and undefiled. He made the material creation immortal, unaging, without hunger, without bondage, without sorrow, and without pain. [That remained the state of things] until there erupted in the darkness the Lie of wickedness, who is not a right chooser of wisdom, goodness, and beneficence. He is a wrecker, murderous, ignorant, deceitful, malicious, misleading, destructive, wasteful, and envious…. In envy, full of vengeance, perfect in deceit, he rushed to seize, destroy, smash, and ruin this well-made creation of the gods.
>
> *ōh-iz dādār ī dahišn dād ān ī mēnōg dām abēzag anahōgēnēd ud ān-iz ī gētīgīg dām amarg a-zarmān ud suyišn ud abandišn abēš ud adard. tā ka candēd andar tom dušīh* [*ī*] *druz kē xrad rāst wizēngar nē wehīh ī spēnāgīg bē hast. škēnnāg margēnāg ud duš-āgāh ud frēbāg ud purr-kēn ud wiyābānēnāg ud wišōbāg ud wanīgar wanīgar ud purr-arešk…. u-š pad arešk ī purr-kēnwarīh ī spurr-druxtārīh nīxwarēd ō griftan wišuftan ud wanēnidan abēsīhēnidan ī im hukard dām ī yazdan.*

12 The verb that is used (Pahlavi *kirrenīdan*) is daēvic and connotes a violent, messy process. See further, Chapter Eleven.

13 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.48 goes on to state that as a by-product of this act, "from the material substance of self-indulgence, he miscreated Lust, which is evil, which has the form of non-being." *u-š az stī xwad-dōšagīh waran ī wad nēst-kirb frāz kirrēnīd*. The "material substance of self-indulgence" (*stī xwad-dōšagīh*) would seem to be the ejaculate he produced through masturbation.

14 *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.10: "The lying Evil Spirit spawned demons, lies, and other sorcerors via self-sodomy." *ud Ahriman ī druwand ud dēwān ud druzān ud abārīg* $^{+}$*jādugān az kūnmarz ī xwēš wišūd*.

15 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.17–18: *kirrenīd was dēw ān ī dām murnjēnidār … *$^{+}$*sahmgēn ī pūdag wadag dušīh nē burzīdōmand*.

16 *Greater Bundahišn* 4.19: *u-š Āz, Niyāz, Sēj, Dard, Yask, Waran, ud Būšāsp pad Gāw ud Gayōmard frāz hišt*. Cf. *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.31 and 36.38–45, which continues the discussion, treating the members of the Evil Spirit's anti-creation at considerable length. Note also an Avestan passage, *Vīdaēuudāt* 20.3, which speaks of "the evil eye, putrefaction, and pollution, which the Evil Spirit created in opposition to this body of mortal beings" (*agašyå pūityå āhityå yā aŋrō mainyuš frākərəntat avi imąm tanūm yąm mašyānąm*).

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This is the start of all physical and moral evils that afflict embodied creatures: a list of seven demonic – what? Beings? Forces? Personified States? Abstract Qualities? Like most Mazdaean discussions, this text defies such questions, for its categories do not correspond neatly to ours. In a moment, we will have to consider the construction of demons as *spritual* beings and the sweeping implications such an understanding entails. First, however, let us note that the first and last demons the Evil Spirit unleashed – Appetite and Torpor – recur in the list of demons associated with non-Aryan peoples. These are the two we will consider more fully.

First, however, we need to understand that Mazdaean cosmology was dualistic – fittingly enough – in two different senses. Thus, it posited a stark ethical opposition of good vs. evil, alongside an equally strong metaphysical distinction between spiritual (Pahlavi *mēnōg* = Avestan *mainyava*) and material (Pahlavi *gētīg* = Avestan *gaēϑa*) planes of existence. The spiritual is theorized as the basis of all existence, being original, intangible and insubstantial. In contrast, material existence came into being at a later moment in cosmic history and characterizes only those creations that the Wise Lord endowed with concrete, embodied being.[17]

Logically, the interaction of these two binaries ought yield four categories: Good-spiritual, Evil-spiritual, Good-material, and Evil-material. The relevant texts insist, however, that only the Wise Lord's creatures possess independent material existence. In contrast, the Evil Spirit's existence is defined as spiritual only. Consisting of nothing save darkness and its associated negative qualities (like cold and ignorance), he has no body or material substance that are properly his own.[18] The same is true of the demons he spawned, whose existence

17 On these categories, see Shaul Shaked, "The notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in the Pahlavi texts and their relation to eschatology," *Acta Orientalia* 33 (1971): 59–107 and Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras: Geschichte – Gegenwart – Rituale* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002) 1: 333–38.

18 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 18.2: "It is said of the Evil Spirit that he does not exist as material being." *Ahriman rāy guft estēd kū gētīg nēst*. Cf. *Arda Wirāz Nāmag* 5.7, *Dēnkard* 5.7.1–2, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.51. The material non-existence of Ahriman has received much attention recently, including treatments by Shaul Shaked, "Some Notes on Ahreman, the Evil Spirit, and his Creation," in E.E. Urbach et al., eds., *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 227–34, Jes P. Asumssen, "Some Remarks on Sasanian Demonology," in *Commémoration Cyrus. Actes du Congrès de Shiraz* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 236–41, Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "The Non-Existence of Ahreman and the Mixture (*gumēzišn*) of Good and Evil," in *K.R. Cama Oriental Institute. Second International Congress Proceedings* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1996), pp. 79–95, and Antonio Panaino, "A Few Remarks on the Zoroastrian Conception of the Status of Angra Mainyu and of the Daēvas," *Res Orientales* 13 (2001): 99–107.

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is spiritual only.[19] If entities like Appetite, Rage, Sickness, Torpor, and the like are to acquire physical substance and material force, they can do so only by penetrating the bodies of good Ohrmazdian creatures, abiding there in parasitic fashion and manifesting themselves through the kinds of behaviors they encourage in those bodies. As a crucial chapter of the *Dēnkard* explains

> Spiritual creation is a single, non-compound being. Its character is non-compound, invisible, and intangible. From the Creator's creativity, creation first comes into spiritual being and is non-compound, invisible, and intangible. Then, in the compounding of things that become material, the good creations are changed to be visible and tangible.... Spiritual light, by the warm-moist power of its life-essence is able to change from non-compound being to compound, i.e. to material being. Even now, all material things are materially established out of that same warm-moist power. Spiritual darkness, however, is not able to achieve compound material existence because of the cold-dry lying/demonic quality of its death-nature. Darkness does not become materially apparent in its own substance, *but only when it has clothed itself in a different substance*.[20]

Once free in the world, demons thus break into the bodies of living beings, which they corrupt, corruption being understood as a process of both moral and physical decay. Once inside, they distort a person's sentiments, behaviors, and being in ways consistent with their individual nature (Lust, Greed, etc.). This can then spawn new demons,[21] including some that infect previ-

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19 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.51: "The Wise Lord's creation is spiritual and also material. That of the Lie is not material. The Lie joins (its) bad spiritual being to the material being (of the Wise Lord's good creations)." *dām ī Ohrmazd mēnōg ud gētīg-iz. ōy <ī> druz nēst gētīg be wad mēnōgīh abyōzēd ō gētīg*.

20 *Dēnkard* 3.105: *hād mēnōg dahišn ast ahambūd ēwtag bawišn u-š* ⁺*waspuhrāgānīh ast hād mēnōg ud dahišn ast ī ahambūd awēnišnīg ud agīrišnīg ud az dādārīhišn dām fradom pad mēnōgīh bawišn ud būdan ahambūd awēnišnīg ud agīrišnīh. ud pad hambawēnidārīh ī bawišnīgān ō gētīgīh wašt ī wēnišnīg gīrišnīg ān paydagīh az-iz ēn ka gētīg tis wēnišnīg ud gīrišnīg ka az gētīg wēnišnīg gīrišnīg wišāyīhēd abāz ō bun bawišn awēnišnīg agīrišnīg mēnōg ast i-š bun šawēd. ud rōšn mēnōg pad garm-xwēd nērōg zīndag cihrīh az ahambūd mēnōg bawišn ō hambawišn ān gētīg waštan ud šāyēd. ān ī nūn-iz hamāg gētīg gētīg pad gētīhā winirdīh az ham nērōg. ud tār mēnōg marg gōhr sard hušk druwandīh rāy im ō hambawišnīg gētīg madan nē šāyēd. ān ī ō paydāg gētīhā mad nē xwēš gōhr* ***be jud gōhr*** ⁺***paymōxīg***. Cf. *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.51 and *Dēnkard* 5.7.2.

21 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.51: "Ever new demons come to people as a result of the ever new crimes they commit against (good) creatures." *nōg nōg dēw nōg nōg az wināh dāmān kunēnd awiš* ⁺*āyēnd* Cf. *Dēnkard* 5.23.21: "From babbling-while-eating, scurrying-about-with-one-shoe, urinating-while-standing, and other (unacceptable, demonic behaviors),

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ously unafflicted creatures and others that wait to torment their progenitors in hell.[22] Once unleashed, demons multiply and spread, contaminating ever more people, in whom they reproduce, morph, and spread once more. Troubling though it is, this analysis also suggests a solution to the problem it poses, i.e. that demons can be defeated on an individual basis by denying them entry into one's body. Further, if all humans can be persuaded to take this step, the triumph of good will necessarily follow.

4

Turning to individual demons, let us begin with Appetite (Avestan *Āzi* = Pahlavi *Āz*), whose name encompasses greed, lust, acquisitiveness and sensual cravings of every sort.[23] Most important of all, perhaps, is insatiable hunger, as the following description makes clear.

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from this kind of thing, it is as if new demons were born." *ud az drāyān-xwarišnīh ud ēw-mōg-dwārišnīh ud* ⁺*estān-mēzišnīh ud abārīg ī az ēn šōn dēw ciyōn* <*zāy az*> *zāyēnd*. Note that the verbs used to describe the acts of speaking (Pahlavi *drāyīdan*) and locomotion (*dwāristan*) in the latter passage are daēvic, used only for irrational speech, erratically violent motion, and the morally defective beings of whom these are characteristic.

22 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 31.2–5:

> The fourth night after death, there is a reckoning for the soul of a liar at the Cinwad Bridge. It is turned upside down and falls. And the demon Wizarš leads him, tyrannically bound. He leads him to hell. And with him there are spiritual demons, which came into being from the evil he did in many forms and places, which resemble spoilers, harmers, killers, destroyers, scoundrels, evil-bodies, wrong-doers, those who are unseemly, most stingy, filthy, biting, and tearing vermin, stinking winds, dark, stinking, burning, thirsting, hungry, inexpiably sinful, and other most sin-causing and harm-causing demons, who become causes of pain for him in the material, as in the spiritual creation. They have strength and power given them by his sin, as much as it is great. And they ceaselessly cause him pain and suffering until the time of the Renovation.
>
> *šāb ī tasum kard āmār az puhl ī Cinwad nigūn gardēd ud kafēnēd. u-š* ⁺*Wizarš dēw sezdēnīhā bastag nayēdu-š nayēd bē ō dušōx. u-š abāg bawēnd mēnōg dēw ī hambust az ān ī ōy wināh pad was cihrag ud gāh mānāg ī wimuštārān-iz rešidārān ōzanišngarān murnjēnidārān marān duškirbān bazag-ēwēnagān ud anabāyistān an-iz-rātigān rēmān gazāgām darrāgān xrafstarān gandagān wādān tārigān gandagān sōzāgān tišnigān* ⁺*gušnāgān* ⁺*anabuhlān ud abārīg frahist wināhēnāgān ud dardēnāgān kē-š pad hangōšidag ī gētīg bēš-kardārān mēnōgīg abāg bawēnd. u-š ham handāzag zōr nerōg i-šān az ān ī ōy wināh ud dād ān īta bē ō frašgird zamān anāsānīhā dardēnēnd bēšišnēnēnd.*

23 Avestan *Āzi* (= Pahlavi *Āz*) is derived from the verb *āz-* "to strive for, long after," on which see Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1904; reprint ed. 1961), col. 342–43. The word has been translated in numerous different ways by scholars who unduly focus on just one of its various aspects. Thus: "le démon du besoin"

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> Appetite (*Āz*) is the demon that devours things. When it has nothing, due to deprivation, then it eats from its own body. It is that demon that when all the wealth of the material world has been given to it, still it does not become filled and sated.[24]

Appetite is present in all animate beings and insofar as hunger prompts them to take nutrition, it helps sustain their lives. Yet, this need-to-eat is a mark of their fallen state, since the Wise Lord originally intended life to be immortal and perfect, with no need to take food (or anything else).[25] As a result of the Evil

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(Darmesteter), "Gier, Begierde" (Bartholomae, Colpe), "Habgier" (Lommel), "Greed, selfish craving, and avidity" (Jackson), "l'Avidité" (Christensen), "Greed, lust" (D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* [London: Oxford University Press, 1971), "Avidity, covetousness" (H.S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi* [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974] 2: 41). Most common is "Concupiscence," favored by R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvān: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962), Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965), and Pirart, *Georges Dumézil face aux démons iraniens*. While Pahlavi texts regularly identify Āz as a demon (*dēw*), the Avesta does not give this title to his counterpart, preferring to speak of Āzi as "demon-created" (*daēuuō.dāta*, cf. *Yasna* 16.8 and *Vīdaēuudāt* 18.19).

24 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.33: *Āz dēw ān kē tis ōbārēd ka Niyāz rāy tis nē mad estēd az tan xwarēd. ān druzīh hast ī ka-š hamāg xwāstag ī gētīg be dād nē hambārēd ud sagr nē bawēd*. Two different terms are used to establish the demonic identity of Āz: *dēw*, the unmarked term, and *druz*, which literally means "lie, falsehood," but is also used for demonic beings of female gender. GBd 27.36 adds more information, citing a lost Avestan passage: "As one says: 'The power of the demon Āz comes from that person who is not content in him/herself and who carries off others' things.'" *ciyōn gōwēd kū Āz dēw zōr az ān ī tan kē pad* [*xwēš ī*] *xwēš ī nē hunsanēnd ān-iz ī kasān be abarēd*.

25 This point is taken up, inter alia, by *Dēnkard* 3.209:

> The definition of mankind in a state of purity is "life-force that is embodied and immortal." In the state of mixture produced by the Evil Spirit's Assault, the definition is "life-force that is embodied and mortal."
>
> *kē rāy wimand-īz mardōm andar abēzagīh axw ī astōmand amarg andar ēbgatīg gumēzigīh axw ī astōmand margōmand.*

and *Dēnkard* 3.317:

> Now, the mortality and immortality of mortal bodies comes from the mixture of antithetical natures/substances produced by the Adversary's original Assault under the star station. The Creator does not preserve his creations as long as they are in the state of mixture produced by the Assault throughout the state of mixture. The reason (he lets) his progeny become mixed with mortality in the general course of things is so that the creations can participate in the Renovation, recovering that which they lost to the desire for death caused by the Adversary's Assault and putting an end to death itself and the Adversary.
>
> *hād ōšōmandīh ud ahōšĪh ōšōmandān tan az jud-gōhr ēbgat gumēzišn azēr star pāyag bawišn. andar ēbgatīg gumēzišn abāz nē* $^{+}$*dāštēd dādār az dahišnān tā andar*

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Spirit's attack, Appetite is now omnipresent, but constitutes an accidental – i.e. non-original and ultimately removable – part of life. Once present in the body, moreover, it introduces physico-moral corruption, a state – better yet, a process – evidenced by the aggressivity of hungry people and by the odors that accompany eating and digestion. A passage from the *Dēnkard* explains.

> The body has its own perfume inside because of nature, and it has its own stench because of Appetite.... Stench, bile, and bodily filth are from voracious/demonic devouring.[26]

Consistently, foul smells index demonic presence and activity.[27] Here, they are associated with excrement; elsewhere with pollution of every sort, above all with *post mortem* putrefaction.[28] Demonic odors also characterizes hell, where those whose lives have been corrupted await the end of time.[29] The wait is finite, however, for after a certain number of millennia, their bodies will be

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gumēzišn. cim pad amaragānīg rawāg paywandīh ī andar gumēzišn abāg $^{+}$*ōšōmandīh bawēd āyēd dahišnān pad be paywastan ī ō frašgird abāz wardēnīdan ān-iš zyān abar kām ōš wihān ēbgat pad frazām ošīh ī xwad ēbgat u-š.*

26 *Dēnkard* 3.235: *hād tan andarōn xwadīg bōy az cihr u-š gand az Āz.... ud gand wiš ud hixr jōyišn*. Note that the last word of this passage – Pahlavi *jōyišn* – is "daēvic" in its semantics, which is to say that it describes a demonic form of eating, immoderate, ugly, vicious and destructive of the eater, as well as the eaten.

27 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.49 explains that all stench originates with demons: "First, the Evil Spirit created the essence of the demons, the spirit of their evil motion. The stench of the Wise Lord's creatures comes into being from that." *u-š nazdist dēwān xwadīh dād dušrawišnīh ān mēnōg ī-š gannāgīh ī dāmān ī Ohrmazd* $^{+}$*az-iš būd*.

28 *Dēnkard* 5.24.19a:

> When the body is dead, the demon Astwihād, the death-maker, the author of powerlessness, the defeater of the soul, comes to it triumphantly. He seizes it and brings his brothers to the body, to inhabit its every place of life. These are the stench-makers, creators of foulness, and other demons who make the body useless and who drive off the opponents antithetical to themselves, like sweet fragrance, purity, good conduct, beauty and others that are necessary. Residing in the body, they increase, so there are more of them all together in the body, so that they breathe corpse-pollution and all illnesses. One can say, without dispute, that the residence of demons is in that pollution.
>
> *ud tan ka murd abarwēzīhā madan* $^{+}$*margīhkardār ud agārēnidār Astwihād stōwēnidār ī gyān u-š abāz grift i-š gyāg gyāg ī zindagīh ud pad mehmānīh andar burdan i-š brādarān gandēnidārān* $^{+}$*pudagēnidārān abārīg ānabēdān kardarān dēwān ō tan* $^{+}$*ānāftan i-šān jud jud xwēš hambadīg ciyōn hubōyīh pākīh huburdīh hucihrīh ud abārīg ī abāyišnīg az tan mehmānīhā wālīdan i-šān andar ham tan owōn frāyīhā kū ō-iz bē nasuš wisp wēmārīh* $^{+}$*damēnd ud ānōh kū dēwān mēhmānīh pad ān ewēnag rēmanīh guftan abē-pahikār spēd bawēd.*

29 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.53: "As regards hell, one says: It is a darkness one can grasp in the hand and a stench one can cut with a knife." *andar* $^{+}$*abāz paydāg dušōx rāy gōwēd kū*

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resurrected and purged of demonic residues, after which they will enjoy the perfect immortal existence the Wise Lord originally intended.[30]

Before that happy end can be accomplished, all demonic beings and forces must be overcome and Appetite plays a crucial role in the eschatological drama. Thus, it is foretold that toward the end of this world's last millennium, the Evil Spirit will make Appetite commander-in-chief of the demons.[31] Righteous humans will counterattack by renouncing the practices through which Appetite asserts and gratifies itself in their bodies: sex, eating, and all forms of acquisitive behavior.[32] Starved of its normal sustenance, a raven-

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tār pad dast šāyēd griftan ud gandagīh pad kārd šāyēd bridan. Cf. *Arda Wirāz Nāmag* 5.5, 18.2–4, and 54.1–6.

30 *Dēnkard* 5.8.8–11:

> The resurrection comes into being at the end with the destruction of the Adversary. The beneficent Creator brings all humanity back to life.... No creature remains in the state produced by the Adversary's original assault. The Evil Spirit, also the other demons and lies, are conquered, killed, and destroyed. All stain and evil are carried away from good creatures. And all creatures like us, whose original substance is light, are established in a state of holiness, purity, freedom from blemish, absence of need, with one's desires accomplished, without misfortune, and all-happiness.
>
> *Ristāxēz pad abdomīg be abesīhēnišnīh ī petyārag bawēd. xwābar dādār ud hamāg +mardōm zīndag abāz kunēd.... ud ēc dām andar petyāragōmandīh be nē mānēd ud Ahriman ud abārīg-iz dēwān ud druzān wānīd ud zad ān ōzad bawēnd ud hamāg petyārag ud āhōg az weh dahišnān bē barīhēd ud hāmist dām ciyōn mān bun gōhr rōšnīh pad abēzagīh ud pākīh ud an-āhōgīh ud abē-niyāzīh ud hanjāft-kāmīh ud apetyāragīh ud hamāg-šādīh winnārīhēd .*

The complex Zoroastrian doctrines concerning resurrection (*ristaxēz*) and perfection of "the final body (*tan ī pasēn*) are treated most extensively at *Greater Bundahišn* 34, *Zād Spram* 34, and *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 48. See, most recently, Mihaela Timuš, "The « Eschatological Body » (*tan ī pasēn*) according to the Zoroastrian Theology," *Studia Asiatica* 4–5 (2003–4): 779–808.

31 *Zād Spram* 34.32–33:

> Then the Evil Spirit made Appetite his chief commander and four subordinate commanders were created, who are Wrath (*Xešm*), Winter (*Zamestān*), Old Age (*Zarmān*), and Distress (*Sēj*), who are homologous with east, west, south, and north.
>
> *u-š pas wazēd spāhbed sālār ī xwad ast +Āz. u-š 4 spāhbed pad hamkārīh frāz dād hēnd <ī> ast Xešm ud Zamestān ud +Zarmān ud Sēj hōmānāgīh ī xwarāsān ud xwarōfrān ud nemrōz ud abāxtar spāhbed.*

32 *Zād Spram* 34.32–45 gives the most extensive account of Appetite's fate at the end of time. At 34.36, it describes the decision of Appetite to divide itself into three separate forms, which may be described as gustatory, sexual, and aesthetic forms of desire. As humanity renounces each of these, the power of Appetite is correspondingly weakened.

> Appetite, being one in nature, was not able to corrupt the creatures when they are scattered. So it divided its powers into three portions: that which is natural, that which is not natural, and that which is beyond nature. The natural is the state when one's life-force is in bondage to eating. The unnatural is excessive desire for sexual intercourse,

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ous Appetite will then devour the other demons one by one, until only she and Ahriman are left. Some variants imagine that Appetite will eat Ahriman, then herself,[33] while others expect that these two, now hopelessly outnumbered, will be vanquished by the forces of good.[34] In either case, Appetite is the last obstacle and its defeat ensures that no needs, desires, frustrations, or aggressions will again disrupt the cosmos, whose original perfection is thereby recovered and ensured. Associating non-Aryan enemies with this demon helps explain their apparent greed and aggression and acknowledges the difficulty of overcoming them, but it also construes struggles against such adversaries as a moral project that can – and ultimately will – be won.

Regarding Torpor (Avestan *Būšiiąsta* = Pahlavi *Būšāsp*), there is less to say. The term encompasses exhaustion, lassitude, drowsiness, lethargy, and all forms of fatigue, or – most basically – a draining away of vital energy as characterized by these states.[35] Different sources describe Torpor as the force that "wants to put all living things to sleep"[36] or "the demon who makes laziness."[37] Regularly, it is included in the set of demons with whom the Evil Spirit first attacked existence[38] and it is said to come from the north, the direction

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which itself is called Lust (*Waran*) and is aroused by seeing that which is inside so that the nature of the body is excited. That beyond nature is the desire for whatever beauty one sees or hears.

ud Āz ēk cihrīhā nē tuwān būd ahōgēnīd tā dāmān pargandag bawēd. ān-iš zōrān pad jomā rawāg būdan ī andar dām rāy ō 3 baxt ī ast cihrīg $^{+}$*cihrīg ud bērōn az cihr. cihrīg ān kā andar xwardārīh kē-š gyān awiš bastag. be-cihrīg kāmagōmandīh ī abar gumēzišn kē xwad waran xwandīhēd kē pad wēnišn ī ō be ān ī andarōn hangēzīhēd ud cihr ī tan awištābīhēd. berōn az cihr ārzōg ī ō kadār-iz-ē nēkīh ī wēnēd ayāb ašnawēd.*

33 *Zād Spram* 1.30:

Time said to the Evil Spirit: "Assisting them is a weapon: Appetite (*Āz*), who will devour you and die herself of hunger, if at the end of 9000 years, it is not completed as he promised you, as the pact was made and time fulfilled."

u-š pad frāz barišnīh guft kū: pad awēšān zay abāgīh Āz ēd ī tō bē jōyēd xwad pad suy frōd mīrēd agar pad sar ī 9000 sāl ciyōn-it $^{+}$*padistēd ud pašt abar kard ud zamān abar grift nē frazāmēnēd.*

34 Thus, *Zād Spram* 34.32–45, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.15–16, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 48.90–96 and *Greater Bundahišn* 34.27–30.

35 The name is translated variously, but always with reference to excessive fatigue. Thus: "le démon du long et paresseux sommeil" (Darmesteter), "Schläfrigkeit" (Bartholomae, Colpe), "lethargy, long sleep, and sloth" (Jackson), "Schlafhexe" (Lommel), "Sleepiness, Somnolence" (Nyberg), "Sleep, Sloth" (MacKenzie), "Statut de ce qui reste à l'état de projet, indolence, paresse" (Pirart).

36 *Vīdaēuudāt* 18.16: *hā vīspəm ahūm … hakat raocaŋhąm fraγrātō nix*^{v}*abdayeiti.*

37 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.32: *dēw ān kē ajgahānīh kunēd.*

38 *Greater Bundahišn* 4.19 (cited above). *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.31 gives a different list of eleven demons who participated in the original attack. Three demons are found in both lists:

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associated with cold, darkness, and all things demonic.[39] Softly, it whispers in the ears of all creatures, urging them to sleep so deep and long that their slumber approximates death.[40] Some texts treat Torpor as a kind of sloth that compromises one's ability to fulfill the moral and ritual obligations that constitute a good life.[41] Others go further still. Having described the Evil Spirit's decision to afflict humanity with death, the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* explains how he rendered this operational.

> He assigned the demon Torpor to weaken the breath, and the demon Fever to cause confusion and weaken the intelligence, and the demon Appetite to do away with one's power. He assigned the demon Old Age to spoil the bodily form and to steal its strength; the Wind of expiration to separate life-force from the body to produce defeat; the demon Wrath to provoke conflict and increase killing; the dark vermin in order to make biting and cause damage; the demon Grief to poison foods and cause death, together with Deprivation and fear-producing Terror, which cools the body's heat, and many destructive powers and very destructive demons, all helpers made for Astwihād [the demon who separates soul and body] for the production of death.[42]

Torpor, Deprivation (*Niyāz*), and Lust (*Waran*). Those not found in the *Bundahišn* list are Evil Mind (*Akōman*), Wrath (*Xēšm*), Old Age (*Zarmān*), Distress (*Tangīh*), Buddha-Idol (*Būd*), Expiration (*Wāy*), and the two bringers of death (*Astwihād* and *Wizarš*).

39 *Fragment Westergaard* 42: "Now the scoundrel Torpor of the long paws stormed forth from the northern direction, babbling thus: 'Sleep, little people, sleep!'" *āat maire fraduuaraiti Būšiiqsta darəγō.gauua apāxtarat haca naēmāt uiti daomna xᵛafsata mašiiākåŋhō.*

40 *Vīdaēuudāt* 18.16 warns against the demon's insidious urgings.

> Get up people, praise Best Truth, revile the demons. Torpor of the long paws storms at you, she who puts all embodied existence to sleep, even when it has awakened with the daylight, (saying): "Sleep long, little people. Your time hasn't arrived."
>
> *usəhištata mašiiāka staota ašəm yat vahištəm nīsta daēuua aēša vō duuaraiti būšiiqsta darəγō.gauua hā vīspəm ahūm astuuantəm hakat raocåŋhąm fraγrātō nixᵛabdaiieiti. xᵛafsa darəγō mašyāka noit tē sacaite.*

41 *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.29–30: "Do not succumb to Torpor, so that your work and the virtuous deeds it is necessary to do do not remain undone." *Būšāsp ō warz kū-t kār ud kirbag ī abāyēd kardan akard nē mānēd.* Cf. *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 16.57–59.

42 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.39–40: u-š *Būšāsp dēw pad nizārēnidan wēn abespārd ud Tab dēw pad stardēnidan ud ōš āšōbēnēd ud Āz dēw zōr ogārdan ud pēš ? sēnišnēnēd. u-š Zarmān dēw pad kirb wināhīdan ud ? appurdan ud wattar Wāy wisānišn gyān az tan stōwēnidan Xēšm dēw pad kōxšišn sārēnīdan ud ōzānišn abzāyēnidan ud tamīgān xrafstarān pad gazišn kardan wināhēnidan ud ⁺Zarīz dēw pad xwarišnān zahrēnidan margīh wihānēnidan abāg Niyāz ī nihān rawišn ud Sahm bīm-kun ud xīndagīh tabišn afsār ud was wināhišnīg ⁺zōrān wināhatārān dēwān hamē āyar kard ō Astwihād pad margēnidārīh.* Cf. *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 22.3.

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Ultimately, all demons contribute to death in one form or another and this is among the most essential qualities of the demonic. In describing the process, however, this important passage begins with Torpor, which constitutes the first sign that life-force is fading. The struggle between life and death, vitality and entropy, is thus renewed every night in every mortal creature, when the fate of existence is understood to hang by a fragile thread. Quoting from an older, but now lost source, the *Bundahišn* asserts

> This too, it says (in the Avesta): "Every night, Torpor storms over earth, water, and righteous creatures, just like a pollution. When the sun comes up, it smites the demons over all the earth and makes it pure." This too it says: "If the sun came up one hour late, the demons would destroy all creation."[43]

Consistent with this line of analysis, it would seem that associating one's national enemies with Torpor might have some real attractions. While acknowledging the danger they pose as serious and consonant with other grave threats, it also implicitly characterizes non-Aryans as physically – and militarily – non-formidable and thus relatively easy to conquer. Provided, of course, one first overcomes in one's self any similar (demonically-induced) inclination to lassitude, sloth, and torpor.

5

Appetite and Torpor appear together in a few other texts,[44] none more interesting or important than a passage from the *Dēnkard* that ponders the demonic assault each new-born infant suffers.

43 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.67–68: *ēn-iz gowēd kū: harw šab* $^{+}$*Būšāsp homānāg nasrust pad zamīg ud āb ud dām-iz ī ahlawān be dwārēd. ka xwaršēd ūl āyēd hamāg zamīg dēwān be zanēd yōjdahr be kunēd. ēn-iz gowēd kū ka xwaršēd ēk zamān pas abar ayēd dēwān hamāg dām be murnjēnd.*

44 The only examples I have found either have been discussed above or will be treated shortly. These include the association of non-Aryan countries with certain demonic powers (*Yašt* 18.1–2), accounts of Ahriman's primordial assault (*Greater Bundahišn* 4.19, *Dādestan ī Dēnīg* 36.31), discussions of death's onset (*Dādestan ī Dēnīg* 36.39), and the great list of demons found in *Greater Bundahišn* 27).

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> The first attacker at the birth of a person is the demon Evil Mind, who causes pain to the child at birth by showing it all the misfortunes that come before death. The sign of this is infantile crying at birth. The opponent of that demon is Good Mind, who shows the good peace and contentment that comes at the very end of time with the ever-living resurrected body. And the sign of this is the abiding peace and contentment of infancy. The second attacker is the demon Appetite, which weakens the body by the power of hunger and thirst. That which is necessary to save one from this comes from the Creator's creation of a desire and taste for milk, which holds hunger and thirst at bay. It is the helper of nature, the smiter of Appetite, and protector of the body. The third attacker is the demon immoderate Torpor, who produces lassitude and is a destroyer of the body. That which holds back its harm and soothes the body is moderate activity.[45]

While registering the seriousness of these threats, the passage speaks confidence that the Wise Lord's prescient benevolence has provided defensive measures against all dangers. Thus, however endangered and unhappy infants may be, the standard course of existence is for milk to appease appetite and for wakeful activity to increase at the expense of sleep and torpor. Granted that all infants suffer and some actually die, the text takes comfort in the fact that most babies survive, become larger, stronger, more independent, and enjoy ever more tranquility as they grow. These are the data it organizes in a fairly complex analysis that constitutes these as nothing less than everyday triumphs of salvific divine benevolence over the demonic assault (Table 3.1).

45 *Dēnkard* 3.374: *hat mardōm pad zāyišn fradom petyāragēnīdār druz Akōman pad anāg pēš frazāmīh ī bēš ī ō zahag pad zāyišn nimūdārīh ī ast <tan ī pasēn> margīh. u-š nīšān zamānīg* $^{+}$*grīyīg ī aburnāyīg pad zāyišn hamēstār ī ēn druz Wahman pad nēk abdom frazāmīh rāmišn nimūdārīh ī ast tan ī pasēn hamē zīndagīh. u-š nīšān mehmānīg rāmišn ī aburnāyīg. dudigar petyāragēnidār druz Āz pad tan nizārēnāg ud suy ud* $^{+}$*tišn abzārīh ud bōzag ī az dādār āfurišn abāyišn pad xwāstārīh ud mizagīh suy ī ud* $^{+}$*tišn spōz pēm ayār ī cihr ud zadār ī Āz srāyīdanag ī tan. sidigar petyāragēnidār druz sustgar murnjenāg ī tan apaymān Būšāsp abāz ī dāštārīh ud wizend u-š āsānitār ī tan paymān aram.*

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TABLE 3.1 Analysis of infantile vulnerability to demonic threats, as worked out in *Dēnkard* 3·374

	First	Second	Third
Demonic Attacker	Evil Mind (*Akōman*)	Appetite (*Āz*)	Torpor (*Būšāsp*)
Nature of Assault	Reveals future misfortunes culminating in death	Hunger and thirst	Destroys the body
Sign of demonic presence	Crying from the moment of birth	Weakness	Lassitude, immoderate sleep
Divine defender	Good Mind (*Wahman*)	Milk and desire for it	Moderate activity
Nature of defensive response	Reveals eschatological peace and contentment	Nursing	Periods of wakefulness
Sign the defender has prevailed	Peace and contentment of the infant	Satiety and growth	Increasing physical abilities, decreasing need to sleep

As is evident in this passage, the purpose of Mazdaean demonology was not just to analyze the threats that pervade existence, but also to provide reassurance that those threats can be mastered. Success is anticipated, moreover, both in the short term of the individual life and the *très longue durée* of the cosmos, which interact and mirror each other. Thus, the baby attains peace and contentment only when – and because – it is assured the cosmos will attain similar peace and all demonic forces will be overcome at history's end. Conversely, each moment of infantile serenity prefigures this happy final state and provides reassurance of its certain coming. For if every infantile cry reveals the presence and activity of demons, every coo announces the immediate – and ultimate – triumph of powers divine.

6

The *Dēnkard*'s discussion of infancy displays and depends on some fairly acute empirical observation, following – and reproducing – a well-established theoretical model that had proven its merits by successful application to countless

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other domains, including the kind of issues we consign to such disciplines as physiology,[46] meteorology,[47] or entomology,[48] to name but a few. This is not "science" as we know it, where empirical observation and experimental method serve continually to test, revise, and refine theory, but a model of "applied theory (or science)," that flourished in many premodern settings. Here, the goal was twofold: first and most explicitly, to gain a new and deeper understanding of a common phenomenon (in this case, the nature of the baby, who represents the quintessential human); second, to confirm the validity of preexisting theory by one more demonstration of its explanatory powers.

The text with which we began (*Yašt* 18.1–2) is probably best understood in similar terms, for all that it elicits a different reaction from modern (or

46 Consider, for example, the analysis of digestion found at *Greater Bundahišn* 28.10:

> In material existence, people commit sins and good deeds. When someone dies, they calculate his sins and good deeds. All those who are pure go to heaven. All those who are liars are thrown into hell. Homologous to this is people's eating of food. All that is good goes to the brain, where it becomes pure blood. All that is mixed with poison goes from the stomach to the intestine and they throw it outside through the anus, which is just like hell.
>
> *owōn ciyōn andar gētīh mardōm wināh ud kirbag kunēnd. ka mīrēd wināh ud kirbag āmārēnēnd. harw cē abēzag ō garōdmān šawēd. harw cē druwand ō dušōx abganēnd. hamgōnag mardōm-īz xwarišn xwarēnd. harw cē abēzag ō ī mazg ī sar šawēd xōn ī pāk bawēd. ō dil rasēd hamāg tan nērōg u-š bawēd. harw cē wiš gumēxtag az kumīg ō rōdīg šawēd pad* $^{+}$*kūn bērōn abganēnd. handāzag ī dušōx.*

Or that of respiration at 28.12:

> Just as the Wise Lord is at the highest station, so the Evil Spirit is at the lowest depth and as their power is equal, their relations are conflictual in the material world. People also have two struggling entities in their bodies. Thus, there is one breath of knowledge, which is the soul, whose seat is in the brain, whose nature is warm-moist, whose motion goes to the navel. And there is one breath of sin, whose nature is cold-dry, whose seat is in the anus, whose motion goes to the sex organs.
>
> *owōn ciyōn Ohrmazd bālist ī Ahriman zofr pāyag. u-š āgenēn nērōg andar andar gētīh ēk ō did kōxšišnīg mardōm-iz 2 andar tan ēk wād ī dānāgīh ast ī ruwān kē-š gāh pad mazg ī sar ud gōhr garm xwēd* $^{+}$*rawišn ō nāfag, ēk wād ī bazag kē gōhr sard hušk ud gāh pad kūn* $^{+}$*rawišn ī ō zahār.*

47 See, for example, the analysis of hail at *Greater Bundahišn* 21.c.11:

> When the demons arrive for the assault, they let cold loose on the cloud. They freeze its water and make it dry, so that it does not rain. They freeze the drops and hail falls.
>
> *dēwān ō petyaragīh rasēnd sardīh padiš hilēnd ān ī āb afsārēnēnd ud hušk kunēnd kū tā nē wārēd. ast-iz ka srešk afsārēnēnd ud tagarg wārēd.*

48 See, for instance, the analysis of swarming insects like ants at *Greater Bundahišn* 22.4:

> Their material being, the light of their eyes, and the breath of their spirit are Ohrmazdian, from that which is similar in the world, and their poison, sinfulness, and malevolence are that which is Ahrimanian.
>
> *ī u-šān stī rōšnīh ī cašm ud wād ī gyānīg Ohrmazdig az ān ī ciyōn andar gēhān u-š wīš bazagīh ud wadkāmagīh ān ī Ahrimanīg.*

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postmodern) readers. Thus, whereas the application of demonological theory to the topic of infancy strikes us as quaint and perspicacious, application of the same theories to the topic of international relations offends us deeply for what we recognize as a mix of racism, nationalism, and crudely self-serving propaganda. In large measure, however, this apparent difference reflects a difference in perspective. Thus, the *Dēnkard* passage identifies with the infant it describes – more precisely, with the infant's loving parents – and so do we. When it construes that baby as a battlefield on which the divine struggles against the demonic, we find ourselves sympathizing with parents and child as they confront hunger, exhaustion, and other familiar troubles.

In contrast, when *Yašt* 18 identifies with the Aryan king and construes a more literal battlefield as the site of struggle against some of the very same threats, it fails to enlist our support. Not only do we tend to identify with the non-Aryan other, we find their association with demons tendentious and unpersuasive. What we perceive is the sole form of demon-talk with which contemporary readers remain familiar: that which we term "demonization." That is, the rhetorical construction of those from whom one feels radically estranged not just as different kinds of people, but as outside the pale of the human and the moral: a polemic act of (re-)classification that legitimates subsequent violence against the demonized other.[49]

To be sure, *Yašt* 18 is a prejudicial text that helped cultivate imperialist aggression and as such, I find it abhorrent. That said, it is not "demonizing" in our sense, for it neither dehumanizes the non-Aryan others, nor does it recode them as "demons" or anything of the sort. Rather, it states that divinely authorized Aryan kingship overcomes two kinds of adversaries – non-Aryan countries and "evil spirits" – without specifying the nature of the relation between them. The term it uses for the latter, however (Avestan *duš-mainyūm*), reflects the Mazdaean view of demons as spiritual beings (Avestan *mainyava-*, Pahlavi *mēnōg*) who lack material existence. Physical corporeality being restricted to the Wise Lord's creation, demons are obliged to penetrate and corrupt the

49 For a small sampling of an enormous, wide-ranging, and fast-growing literature, see David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), Nahi Alon and Haim Orner, *The Psychology of Demonization: Promoting Acceptance and Reducing Conflict* (Mahwah, NJ: Eribaum, 2006), Tom De Luca and John Buell, *Liars! Cheaters! Evildoers! Demonization and the End of Civil Debate in American Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, revised ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Robert Wistrich, ed., *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999).

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bodies of good creatures if they are to acquire any physical force, as we have repeatedly seen.

The text thus theorizes the inhabitants of non-Aryan countries in ways that parallel the *Dēnkard*'s analysis of the new-born infant. Both foreigners and babies are fully human creatures of the Wise Lord and, as such, entirely good *ab initio*. When they manifest disquieting behaviors – crying or acting aggressive, e.g. – it is not an evil person who does so, but a person whose body has been penetrated and corrupted by demonic forces. Good parents understand this and such behavior prompts concern for the child's welfare. They comfort the baby, tend its needs, and provide moral guidance as it grows up. Should an older child manifest behaviors that suggest continued demonic presence (e.g. temper tantrums that reveal the presence of Rage, laziness that manifests Torpor), its parents have recourse to discipline. Here, one should note that such a response is not prompted by anger, for that would suggest demonic influence on the parent. Rather, it manifests benevolent (i.e. Ohrmazdian) concern for the safety and welfare of the child, for others endangered by the child, and ultimately for the entirety of Ohrmazd's good creation. In similar fashion, Persian imperialism experienced itself as paternalistic in the fullest, most flattering sense. The wars it waged were not conceived as an attempt to exterminate demonic neighbors, but to rescue good people from demonic forces to which they had unfortunately fallen victim.[50] Imperial

50 The significance of Old Persian *daiva* in Xerxes' inscription at Persepolis has been much discussed and opinion is divided as to whether it means "old gods," "foreign gods," or "demons." If the last is correct – as would be consistent with the cognate terms in other Iranian languages (Avestan *daēva*, Pahlavi *dēw*), one would translate the relevant passage (XPh §§4–6) as follows.

> Proclaims Xerxes the King: When I became king, there was among the lands/peoples inscribed above one that was seething (in rebellion). Then the Wise Lord bore me aid. By the Wise Lord's will, I smote that land/people and set it in place. And among these lands/peoples there was one where formerly demons were worshipped. Then, by the Wise Lord's will, I demolished that demon-temple. And I ordered that the demons not be worshipped there, where formerly demons were worshipped. There I worshipped the Wise Lord at the proper time and in the proper ritual style. And there was more that was ill-done; that I made good. That which I did, I did all of it by the Wise Lord's will. The Wise Lord bore me aid until I did what was done.
>
> *yaϑā taya adam xšāyaϑiya abavam, asti antar aṭ̣tā dahyāva, tayaį̨ upari nīpištā, ayaṵda: pasāvamaį̨ Auramazdā upastām abara. vašnā Auramazdahā avām dahyāvam adam ajanam utašim gāϑavā nīšādayam. utā antar aṭ̣tā dahyāva āha, yadātaya paruvam daį̨vā ayadiya; pasāva vašnā Auramazdahā adam avam daį̨vadānam viyakanam utā patiyazbayam: daivā mā yadiyaiša; yadāyadā paruvam daį̨vā ayadiya. avadā adam Auramazdām ayadai ṛtācā brazmanīya. utā anīyašci āha, taya duškṛtam akariya, ava adam naį̨bam akunavam; aita taya adam akunavam visam vašnā Auramazdahā akunavam. Auramazdāmai upastām abara, yātā kṛtam akunavam.*

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administration was designed to complete the project of the foreigners' rescue and perfection.[51]

That imperialism should mirror child-rearing is not the result of any influence the one exercised on the other, but follows from the fact that both these – and countless other – domains were informed by Mazdaean demonlogy, which supplied a protocol for consideration of any topic and a template that could be applied to its particular features. One began by perceiving any given material entity as good in its essence, but morally ambiguous in its current state of existence. Next, one sought to identify the accidental evils – the exogenous demonic spiritual powers – that had distorted and corrupted the essential good. Then, one mobilized that which is good to drive out the invasive evil. The operation was to be repeated endlessly and everywhere, until the world's perfection would be restored.

7

In closing, I would like to attempt a more precise – and more sweeping – description of how Mazdaeans theorized the demonic. Earlier, I provisionally described demonology as "an unflinching attempt to name, comprehend, and defend against all that threatens, frightens, and harms us." Along these lines, Mazdaean demonology identified several score individually named demons and several texts provide long lists of same.[52] The longest and most complete of these is found in *Greater Bundahišn* 27.14–50, which describes

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51 See, for example, a passage from one of Darius's inscriptions at Susa (DSe §4):

> Proclaims Darius the King: Much that was ill-done, that I made good. The lands/peoples were seething (in rebellion), one smote the other. This I did by the Wise Lord's will, so that one does not smite the other any more. Each one is in place. My law – of that they feel fear, so that he who is stronger does not smite, does not destroy him who is weak.
>
> *θāti Dārayavauš xš: vasaį taya duškṛtam āha, ava naįbam akunavam. dahyāva aγaųda, aniya aniyam aja. ava adam akunavam vašnā Auramazdāhā yaθā aniya aniyam naį jati cinā, gāθavā kašci asti. dātam taya manā hacā avanā tṛsanti yaθā haya taųvīyā tayam skaųθim naį jati naį vimṛdati*.

I have treated the religious bases of Achaemenian imperialism more thoroughly in *Religion, Empire, and Torture: The Case of Achaemenian Persia. With an Appendix on Abu Ghraib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) and *"Happiness for Mankind": Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).

52 Such lists are found at *Vīdaēuudāt* 10.9–17, 19.40–47, *Yašt* 3.5–17, *Greater Bundahišn* 5.1–3, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.31 and 36.37–46. *Greater Bundahišn* 27.46 adds the observation "It says [in the Avesta]: 'There are also a great many nameless demons.'" *dēwān-iz anāmagān pad was maragīh gōwēd*.

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thirty-six demons, each of which has its own distinguishing characteristics and qualities,[53] but these may be grouped in four general categories. First is the set of demons headed by Appetite. These are the urges and pains that originate in a sense of emptiness, whereby the self feels the lack of something it needs, desires, and/or deserves. This sense compounds itself in feelings of misery, self-pity, and resentment of others that can prompt violent acts of aggression. In this group one finds Appetite (*Āz*) herself, along with Envy (*Arešk*), Rage (*Xēšm*), Lust (*Waran*), Deprivation (*Niyāz*), Distress (*Sēj*), Miserliness (*Penīh*), Grief (*Bēš*), and Sorrow (*Zarīg*). Second is a group that includes varied forms of ignorance and falsehood. These are the failures of thought and speech that replace an accurate sense of that-which-is with a deceptive image of what-is-not, causing confusion, disorder, and providing the basis for all manner of subsequent conflicts. Here one finds the Evil Spirit (*Ahriman*), Evil Mind (*Akōman*), Falsehood (*Mihōxt*), Denial (*Akātāš*), Deceit (*Frēftar*), Slander (*Spazg*), and Untruth (*Arāst*). The third group includes all those demons concerned with disease, mortality, and decay: the processes whereby life is lost and bodies come undone. This is the group headed by Torpor (*Būšāsp*), which also includes Fever (*Tab*), Pain (*Dard*), the Evil Eye (*Aš* and *Sūrcašmīh*), Sorcery (*Kundag*), Old Age (*Zarmān*), Death (*Marg*), the demon who separates body and soul (*Astwihād*), the one who drag sinners to hell (*Wizarš*), also Corpse-pollution (*Nasu*), Rottenness/Pollution (*Pudagīh*), Stench (*Gandagīh*), and Vileness (*Odag* and *Wadagīh*). A fourth category, smaller than the others, includes demons who are said to be responsible for the disruptions we non-demonologically inclined moderns are wont to describe as "natural disasters." These include Drought (*Apōš*), whom we have already met, Aspenjarvya, who obstructs the rain in some unspecified way, and Cēšmag, the demon responsible for whirlwinds and earthquakes.[54]

If demonic multiplicity can be subsumed in these four groups, the groups themselves have a certain coherence that reveals the essence of the demonic as construed in the Mazdaean tradition. For in all these varied demons, one perceives the same underlying menace that haunts the Wise Lord's creation. Most basically, this is the threat of non-being that manifests itself in anguished experiences of emptiness like appetite and lust; negative entropies like torpor and disease; unreal states like falsehood and ignorance; finally, in the reeking

53 I am excluding from consideration the six "chief demons" (*kamālīgān dēwān*) discussed in *Greater Bundahišn* 27.6–12. This set has its own complex history and logic, which has received much discussion. Most recently, see Pirart, *Georges Dumézil face aux démons iraniens*, op cit., pp. 34–55.

54 As regards the whirlwind demon, see Chapter Twelve.

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fluids of bodily decay and the vortex at the center of the whirlwind.[55] These are, in effect, the black holes of a pre-modern cosmology: terrifying forces of a void that seeks – in myriad forms and by myriad means – to invade good creatures and substances, hollowing them out, infecting them with rot, and turning them to its own infinitely corrupt and corrupting purposes.

Hardly naïve, superstitious, or puerile, this is a profoundly serious and profoundly original vision. Not easily dismissed and deeply disquieting, it challenges our most fundamental ideas about the nature of being itself, not to mention the smug condescension we commonly harbor toward those who believe in demons.

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55 *Dēnkard* 3.271:

> The material existence of demonic evil is the power of non-being (*nērōg ī anast*) and invisibility, like darkness. And the material dissemination of evil will be permitted in the semblance of material existence, in the power of good, and in the creation itself.
>
> *ud wattarīh druzīg u-š gētīg stī nērōg ī anast ud apaydāgīh ciyōn tārīgīh. ud wattarīh rawāgīh gētīgīhā pad hāwandīh gētīg stī nērōg ī ud wehīh ud dām xwēš ud hilēh.*

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CHAPTER 4

Toward a more Materialist Ethics: Vermin and Poison in Zoroastrian Thought

1

Whereas the Older Avesta (i.e. the *Gāthās* and *Yasna Haptaŋhāiti*, composed c. 1000 BCE) generally treats evil as a spiritual quality, later Zoroastrian texts imagine increasingly tangible instantiations.[1] This can be seen from several semantic shifts from earlier to later textual strata. To begin with a relatively simple example, the case of *xrafstra-* is instructive. In the Older Avesta, this term appears three times, always as an adjective.[2] The most convincing etymology derives it from an Indo-European verbal root **skrep-*, "to bite, sting, cut,"[3] and translators have rendered it variously, including "rough,"[4] "fierce,"[5] "poisonous,"[6] "wild,"[7] "fearsome,"[8] and "foul."[9] In one verse, it modifies the noun *hizuua-* ("tongue, language"), describing a particularly sharp kind of speech (*Yasna* 28.5c); in a second, it modifies *auruna-* "beast, wild animal" (*Yasna* 34.9c).[10] The third occurrence holds the most interest for us, however, just as it

1 This chapter was originally published in *Studia Iranica* 44 (2015): 83–98.

2 Although earlier translators and lexicographers treated *xrafstra-* as a substantive in some of its Gāthic occurrences (most notably *Yasna* 34.5, to be discussed below), see the assessment of Jean Kellens and Eric Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques*, (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1988–91), Vol. 3, p. 231, who argue convincingly that the syntax of *Yasna* 28.5 and 34.5 show its usage to be exclusively adjectival in the older texts.

3 H.W. Bailey, "A Range of Iranica," in Mary Boyce and Ilya Gershevitch, eds., *W. B. Henning Memorial Volume* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), pp. 25–28.

4 James Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta*, 3 vols. (Paris: Musée Guimet, 1892–93), French *brute*.

5 S. Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

6 Lennart Olsson, *De avestiska gatha'erna: Inledande studie* (Lund: Lund Studies in African and Asian Religions, 1994), Swedish *förgiftand*.

7 Kellens and Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques*, Vol. 2, p. 231, French *sauvage*. Although this appears in the lexicon, it does not figure in any translation of the verses where the term appears.

8 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 231, French *affreux*, used in their translation of *Yasna* 28.5 (1: 106).

9 Ibid., Vol. 1, pp. 126 and 127, French *infect*, which is not listed in the lexicon, but is used to translate *Yasna* 34.5 and 34.9.

10 Technically, it is possible that *auruna-* is the adjective and *xrafstra-* the noun in *Yasna* 34.9, since usage of the former term is somewhat fluid. Thus, it is adjectival in *Yašt* 14.23, where it modifies *maēša-* (thus, a "wild sheep"), but substantive in *Yašt* 8.36, which speaks of "mountain-dwelling beasts" (*aurunaca gairišācō*).

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did for commentators in the Zoroastrian tradition, since it contains grammatical, as well as cosmological complexities of considerable importance. Here, the priest-poet addresses the Wise Lord as follows.

> We proclaim you superior to all noxious gods and humans.
>
> *parā vå vīspāiš parā.vaoxəma, daēuuāiščā xrafstrāiš maṣiiāiščā.*
>
> YASNA 34.5C

Crucial to the interpretation of this line is the question of whether its key phrase names two or three types of being. Two are certain: the *daēuua*-s (i.e. the old gods, who came to be demonized in Zoroastrianism) and *mašiia*-s (humans, literally mortals).[11] In between, however, is the term *xrafstra*-, which appears in the same grammatical case as the others (plural instrumental). If this is a substantive, it would constitute a third class of subordinate beings: presumably, nasty animals. Alternatively, if it is adjectival, as translated above, *xrafstrāiš* would modify the preceding *daēuuāiš*, helping characterize deities of this sort and explaining why they were inferior to the Wise Lord. Two arguments militate against the first possibility. First, the logic of the series presumes a sequence moving down the scale of ontological dignity (i.e. gods-humans-animals), rather than gods-animals-humans as this wording would have it. Second, Avestan grammar requires that when a series of three nouns is coordinated via the enclitic particle *-cā* ("and"), the *-cā* can be attached to the last noun, the last two, or all three but not the first and third. In a syntactical formation like A-*cā* B C-*cā* (like *daēuuāiščā xrafstrāiš mašiiāiščā*) the B-element is not a noun, but a modifier functioning as part of a multi-word phrase.[12]

Failing to take cognizance of this rule, some translators have interpreted *xrafstra*- as a substantive in Yasna 34.5c,[13] reifying the quality of ferocity,

11 On the formulaic relation between *daēuua*- and *mašiia*-, and proper interpretation of the former as "old god" in the Older Avesta, shifting to "demon" in later texts, see Emile Benveniste, "Hommes et dieux dans l'Avesta," in Gernot Wiessner, ed., *Festschrift für Wilhelm Eilers* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), pp. 144–47.

12 Hans Reichelt, *Awestisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1909), p. 357. Cf. Kellens and Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques*, Vol. 2, pp. 143 and 150–51.

13 Inter alia, Christian Bartholomae, *Die Gatha's des Awesta* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1905), Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *Zoroastre, essai critique avec une traduction commentée des gāthās* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1948), Kaj Barr, *Avesta* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1954), Herman Lommel, *Die Gathas des Zarathustra*, ed. Bernfried Schlerath (Basel: Schwabe, 1971), Helmut Humbach, Josef Elfenbein, and Prods O. Skjærvø, *The Gāthās of Zarathushtra and the Other Old Avestan Texts* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991), and M.L. West, *The Hymns of Zoroaster* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010). Surprisingly, the Pahlavi translators of this verse

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wildness, or toxicity it expresses and conjuring up a set of (bad) animals to parallel the (bad) gods and (bad) humans denoted by *daēuua-* and *mašiia-*. The same error was made by those who produced the Younger Avesta, where *xrafstra-* is never an adjective, but always a noun that denotes harmful creatures characterized by swarming and biting. Flies, ants, and lice (but no others) are identified as part of this category.[14]

Given the absolute benevolence Zoroastrian doctrine attributes to the Wise Lord, priests reasoned that he could not have created these destructive species, which must therefore be creatures "of the Evil Spirit" (*aŋrahe mainiiəuš xrafstra*).[15] This idea, first introduced in the Younger Avesta, prompted a radically innovative line of speculation, construing the Evil Spirit as author of a counter-creation antithetical to the Wise Lord's, as in *Yasna* 19.1–4.

> Zarathuštra asked the Wise Lord, "Wise Lord, Most beneficent spirit, Creator of corporeal creatures, Righteous One! What was the word you pronounced to me, Wise Lord, before there was sky, before earth, before the (primordial) bovine, before the (primordial) plant, before fire, son of the Wise Lord, before the righteous (primordial) man; before demons, *xrafstra*s, and people; before all corporeal being, before all good things created by the Wise One, which are manifestations of Truth?"
>
> Then the Wise Lord answered, "It was the *Ahuna Vairiia* prayer, Spitama Zarathuštra, which I pronounced to you before there was sky, before water, before earth, before the cow, before the plant, before fire, son of the Wise Lord, before the righteous man; before there were demons, *xrafstra*s, and people; before all corporeal being, before all good things created by the Wise One, which are manifestations of Truth."[16]

---

properly understood *xrafstra-* as an adjective and translated the phrase *daēuuāiščā xrafstrāiš* by *dēwān kē xrad stard*, "demons whose wisdom is confounded," suggested by the folk etymological connection between *xrafstra* and *xrad stard*. The same translation is given for the two other occurrences, Yasna 28.5c and 34.9c. Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* 1: 208n19 entertained the idea that although this rendering had the appearance of a "fantaisie etymologique," it might actually be correct. In contrast, the most recent editors of the text so discount the reading *xrad stard* that they judge it "probably a scribal error for *xrafstar*." William W. Malandra and Pallan Ichaporia, *The Pahlavi Yasna of the Gāthās and Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2013), p. 49n1.

14 Flies in *Vīdaēuudāt* 7.2 and 9.26, ants in *Vīdaēuudāt* 16.12, and lice in *Vīdaēuudāt* 17.3.

15 Yašt 21.1.

16 Yasna 19.1–4: *pərəsat zaraϑuštrō ahurəm mazdąm ahura.mazda mainiiō spəništa datarə gaēϑanąm astuuaitinąm ašāum. cit auuat vacō ās ahura.mazda yat mē frāuuaocō. para asməm para āpəm para ząm para gąm para uruuarąm para ātrəm ahurahe mazdå puϑrəm para narəm ašauuanəm para daēuuāišca xrafstrāiš mašiiāišca para vīspəm ahūm*

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Several constructs typical of the Younger Avesta (but absent from the Older) figure prominently in this passage. First, the *Ahuna Vairiia* – i.e. the verse with which the *Gāthās* commence, the most sacred of all speech acts – is theorized as originating with the Wise Lord, not Zarathuštra, and as having already existed in eternity, prior to Mazdā's acts of material creation.[17] Second, the Wise Lord is said to have established the world in seven distinct steps: first sky, then water, earth, animal, plant, fire, and human.[18] Significantly, each of these nouns is in the singular accusative, conveying the idea there was originally only one of each creation, whose primordial unity was an aspect of its perfection.[19] After spelling out this cosmogonic sequence, the text introduces three classes of being that stand outside the Wise Lord's creation and in active opposition to it, each named in the plural instrumental. Both case and number are significant, insofar as use of the plural contrasts the multiplicity of these evil beings to the perfect unity of the earlier creations, while the ungrammatical use of the instrumental shows the phrase *daēuuāišca xrafstrāiš mašiiāišca* to be a direct citation of *Yasna* 34.5c (i.e. the passage discussed above), the only other place this wording appears.[20] Finally, consistent with the Younger

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astuuantəm para vīspa vohu mazdaδāta ašaciϑra. āat mraot ahurō mazdå baγa aēša ās ahunahe vairiiehe spitama zaraϑuštra yat tē frāuuaocəm. para asməm para āpəm para ząm para gąm para uruuarąm para ātrəm ahurahe mazdå puϑrəm para narəm ašauuanəm para daēuuāišca xrafstrāiš mašiiāišca para vīspəm ahūm astuuantəm para vīspa vohu mazdaδāta ašaciϑra. All texts from the Younger Avesta are taken from Karl Geldner, ed., *Avesta, die heiligen Bücher der Parsen,* 3 vols. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1886–95).

17 On later fetishization of the *Ahuna Vairiia*, see Emile Benveniste, "La prière Ahuna Vairya dans son exégèse Zoroastrienne," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 1 (1957): 77–85, C.J. Brunner, "Ahunwar," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 683, updated online at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ahunwar-middle-persian-form-of-avestan-ahuna-vairya-name-of-the-most-sacred-of-the-gathic-prayers-y, Gerd Gropp, "Zādsprams Interpretation des Ahunavairyo-Gebetes," in R.E. Emmerick and Dieter Weber, eds., *Corolla Iranica: Papers in honour of Prof. Dr. David Neil MacKenzie* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 79–89, and Yuhan Vevaina, "'Enumerating the *Dēn*': Textual Taxonomies, Cosmological Deixis, and Numerological Speculations in Zoroastrianism," *History of Religions* 50 (2010): 211–43.

18 The canonic order of creation takes shape in such Younger Avesta texts as *Yašt* 13.86–87, *Vīdaēuudāt* 9.42, *Visprad* 7.4 and 19.8, which are modeled after *Yasna* 37.1, but differ from their antecedents in the *Gāthās* (*Yasna* 44.3–6, and 51.7). One should note two anomalies in the list of *Yašt* 19.2 and 4, however. Normally the first plant precedes the first animal and fire is not always included. When it does appear, it follows the first human and is the culminating item of the series.

19 On the importance of the singular in these creation accounts, see Chapter Two, above.

20 Note also that the adverb *para* ("before") precedes each of the first seven creations (sky, water, etc., each named in the accusative), but is set in front of the entire phrase *daēuuāišca xrafstrāiš mašyāišca* in *Yasna* 19.2 and 4, indicating that these words were lifted

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Avestan nominalization of *xrafstra-* (as evidenced by all other occurrences), *Yasna* 19 understands the phrase to identify three – and not two – kinds and levels of beings: demons (*daēuua-* now having lost its earlier sense of "old gods"), corruptible mortals (*mašiia-*), and noxious creatures/verminous insects (*xrafstra-*).

In this moment, *xrafstra*s become crucial members of the anti-creation, a theme further elaborated in Pahlavi literature. Most important is the discussion of the *Greater Bundahišn*, which details Ahriman's creation of monstrous assistants in his aggression. First of these are demons (*dēw* < Avestan *daēuua-*), which he cut out of his own body[21] to help him attack the sky.[22] Next, he created *xrafstar*s (< Avestan *xrafstra-*, now fully transformed to a substantive denoting "vermin, noxious creatures") to serve as his shock troops against the earth.

> He set vermin (*xrafstarān*) on the earth: biting, poisonous vermin were generated in bodily form from him, like serpents, snakes, scorpions, lizards, tortoises, and frogs, so that not so much as the point of a needle was free from them on the entire earth.[23]

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from the *Gāthās* and treated as if the whole expression itself were a quasi-accusative element that could be governed by *para*, which nowhere else is used in connection with the instrumental. Cf. Reichelt, *Awestisches Elementarbuch*, p. 275 and Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1904), col. 852–53.

21 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.16: "He saw bravery and victory greater than his own and he scurried back to the darkness and miscreated many demons, which are creation-destroyers that he needed for battle" (*u-š pas cērīh ud abarwēzīh ī freh az ān ī xwēš abāz ō tam dwārist ud kirrēnīd was dēw ān dām ī murnjēnīdār niyāz ō ardīkkarīh*). Note the use of the verb *kirrenīdan* (literally "to cut, dismember") here and elsewhere to contrast the violence of Ahrimanian mis-creation to the constructive and generous nature of its Ohrmazdian counterpart, denoted by *dādan* ("to establish, set in place for the first time, give") and *brēhēnīdan* ("to assemble, construct"). All passages from the *Bundahišn* are cited following Fazlollah Pakzad, *Bundahišn: Zoroastrische Kosmogonie und Kosmologie. Band I: Kritische Edition* (Tehran: Centre for the Great Islamic Encyclopaedia, 2005).

22 Ibid. 4.10–11: "Then the Foul Spirit rose up against the lights, together with his demons and powers … At noon, he made the world fully dark, like a murky night" (*pas āxist Gannāg-Mēnōg abāg hāmist dēwān abzārān ō padīrag ī rōšnān … u-š gēhān pad nēm-rōz owōn ōst tom be kard čiyōn šab ī tērag homānāg*).

23 Ibid. 4.15: *aziš zamīg xrafstarān abar hišt {owōn astōmand aziš be hambūst hēnd xrafstar ī} gazāg ī wišōmand čiyōn az ud mār ud gazdum ud karbāš ud kašawag ud wazaγ kū sōzan tēx-ē(w) az xrafstarān zamīg nē pargūd*. In contrast, *Zad Sprām* 2.11 has *xrafstars* make their first appearance in the Evil Spirit's assault on the primordial human.

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This story goes further and we will consider its subsequent episodes shortly, but first it is useful to trace another line of semantic development from the Older Avesta to later texts.

2

Let us begin with a brief survey of the vocabulary used to denote "evil" in Older Avestan.[24] This includes *aka-*, which occurs four times as a substantive[25] and seven as an adjective; *acišta-* the superlative form of *aka-* (two occurrences as a substantive,[26] four adjectival); *aŋra-* (three occurences, all adjectival);[27] and the pejorative prefix *duš-*/*duž-*, which is the first element of sixteen compounds. All these terms are used to describe entities judged (and labelled) wicked, destructive, corrupt, corrupting, and – most broadly – deleterious to the good creatures of the Wise Lord's creation. Significantly, the bad things these terms identify in the Old Avesta are consistently spiritual, and not material in nature: thought or mind (*manah-*),[28] word (*vacah-*),[29] deed (*šiiaoϑana-*),[30] choice (*varana-*),[31] intention (*mantu-*),[32] invocation (*azōbah-*),[33] intellect (*xraϑβa-*, from *xratu-*),[34] power, rule, or authority (*xšaϑra-*),[35] teaching or doctrine (*sasti-*),[36] religion (*daēnā-*),[37] and life (*jiiāti-*).[38]

24 For full listings, see the relevant entries in Kellens and Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques, Vol. II: Répertoires grammaticaux et lexique*.

25 The substantive occurences are *Yasna* 32.12, 51.6, and 51.8, denoting punishment the Wise Lord enacts on liars and other evil-doers, and *Yasna* 32.2, where it denotes the harm evil-doers do to other mortals.

26 These occurences follow the same pattern as those of substantive *aka-*: once denoting harm done by evil-doers (*Yasna* 32.10) and once by the Wise Lord's exercise of retribution (*Yasna* 32.4).

27 Two of the three occurrences are metalinguistic, the lexeme *aŋra-* being used to identify itself as a term of opprobrium that liars and the truthful each direct against the other (*Yasna* 43.15 and 44.12).

28 *manah-* is modified by *aka-* at *Yasna* 33.4 and 47.5; by *acišta-* at *Yasna* 30.6 and 32.13; *dužmanah-* at *Yasna* 49.11.

29 *dužuuacah-*, *Yasna* 49.11.

30 *šiiaoϑana-* is modified by *aka-* at *Yasna* 46.11; *duš.šiiaoϑana-* at *Yasna* 31.15, 34.9, 49.11.

31 *varana-* is modified by *aka-* at *Yasna* 45.1; *dužuuarəna-* at *Yasna* 53.9.

32 *mantu-* is modified by *acišta-* at *Yasna* 33.4

33 *dužazōbah-*, *Yasna* 46.4.

34 *duš.xraϑβa-*, *Yasna* 49.4.

35 *dušə.xšaϑra- Yasna* 48.10 and 49.11.

36 *duš.sasti-*, *Yasna* 32.9 and 45.1.

37 *dužd*aēna-, *Yasna* 49.11.

38 *dužjiiāiti-*, *Yasna* 46.8.

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Only three verses describe something concrete as "evil." Strikingly, all three speak of the "evil food" that awaits wayward humans as a result of their moral failings.[39] Typical is Yasna 49.11.

> But those whose power is evil, whose deeds are evil, whose words are evil,
> Whose religion is evil, whose thought is evil, those of the Lie,
> Their souls proceed with evil foods.
> By this truth, may they be guests in the House of the Lie.[40]

A full discussion of this verse would dwell on its nature as an "Act of Truth," i.e. a magico-ritual speech-act that transforms the absolute veracity of its first proposition (contained in the first three lines) into a performative force sufficient to realize its still-emergent second proposition (voiced in the optative of the last line).[41] Our concern, however, is the anomaly of "evil food," which was sufficiently striking that the scribes responsible for nineteen manuscripts felt the need to add a gloss on it. Of these, twelve normalized the anomaly by recoding the "evil foods" (*akāiš xᵛarəϑāiš*) as spiritual in nature, being "of the Lie" (*drūjō* and variants).[42] In contrast, the other seven manuscripts embrace the materiality of this particular manifestation of evil, which they identify as "poison," using a term that never appears in the Older Avesta, for all that it has a good Indo-Iranian and Indo-European etymology (*višā.aδcā* and variants).[43]

If *Yasna* 19.1–4 expanded the notion of evil to include noxious animals (mostly insects and reptiles), the glosses to *Yasna* 49.11 carry that expansion to select forms of inanimate matter recognized as antithetical to the good creation. The Younger Avesta contains only a few hints of what might be at issue in this, as it speaks very little of poison (*viš-*). The full dossier includes a description

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39 *akāiš xᵛarəϑāiš*, *Yasna* 49.11; *duš.xᵛarəϑa-*, *Yasna* 31.20 and 53.6.

40 *aṯ ⁺dusə.xšaϑrāṇg, duš.šiiaoϑanāṇg dužuuacaŋhō*
dužd aēnāṇg, dužmanaŋhō drəguuatō
akāiš xᵛarəϑāiš, paitī uruuąnō paitiieiṇtī
drūjō dəmānē, haiϑiiā aŋhən astaiiō.

41 The phrase *haiϑiiā aŋhən* in *Yasna* 49.11d signals its nature as a classic Indo-Iranian Act of Truth. On these much discussed utterances, see George Thompson, "On Truth-Acts in Vedic," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 125–53, with citation of the earlier literature.

42 Geldner, *Avesta* 1: 74–75, ad loc., note 9. Manuscripts J2.6.7, Pt4, Mfr.2, Jp1, and H add the gloss *drūjō*; K5.11, C1, Jm1, Dh1, O2, and L2.3 have *drujō*, and K4 has *drəjō*.

43 Ibid. The gloss *višā.aδcā* ("and poison") appears in manuscripts J2, K5, L13, O1, and P1; J3 and Mf2 have *visā.atacā*. Avestan *viša- and viš-* are derived from Indo-European **u̯iso-* "poison, foul fluid," cognate to Vedic *viṣá-*, Greek ἰός, Latin *virus*, and Middle Irish *fí*. Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), p. 1134.

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of poisonous foods given sinners in hell,[44] passing mention of a poisonous spider,[45] and three references to poisonous serpents (two of them mythic).[46] One of the last group holds interest, as it calls on Haoma – the precious fluid at the center of sacrificial ritual, pressed from the most life-sustaining of plants[47] – to rescue righteous people from the threat of the serpent's venom.[48] The opposition of these two fluids (haoma and poison) implicitly contrasts life and death, good plants and bad animals, the Wise Lord's creation and the Evil Spirit's response, but the Younger Avesta offers little more to go on. The situation is different in Pahlavi literature, however, whose authors showed keen interest in the nature of poison.

3

Earlier, we considered the first stages of Ahriman's anti-creation as described in the *Bundahišn*, whereby he produced demons (*dēwān*) to fight against the sky, then "biting, poisonous vermin" (*xrafstar ī gazāg ī wišōmand*) to assault the earth.[49] In the next phase of operations, the Evil Spirit extracted their poison and used it directly.

> It says in the religion that when the Evil Spirit scurried in, he mixed the poison of vermin and the spirit of sin (as in the snake, the scorpion, the lizard, the ant, the fly, the locust, and a great many others of this kind) with water, earth, and the plant.[50]

---

44 *Hādōxt Nask* 2.36: "Of the foods borne to him, poison stinking of poison is the food given after death to the youth whose thoughts are evil, whose words are evil, whose deeds are evil, and whose religion is evil." *xᵛarəϑanąm hē barətąm višaiiāaṭca višgaiṇtaiiāaṭca ta asti yūnō dušmanaŋhō dužuuacaŋhō duš.šiiaoϑnahe duždaēnahe xᵛarəϑəm pasca auua.mərəitim*. Cf. *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.187–91.

45 *Yašt* 5.90: *varənava.viša.* Translation of *varənava-* (a term that occurs only in this verse) as "spider" is speculative.

46 *Yašt* 19.40 and *Yasna* 9.11 (formulaic descriptions of the mythic "horned serpent" *aži sruuāra*) and 9.30 (a non-mythic serpent).

47 Most thoroughly on the ideology of haoma and its sacrifice, see Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd, *A Persian Offering. The Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1991).

48 *Yasna* 9.30, which is translated and discussed more fully below.

49 *Greater Bundahišn* 4.15: *aziš zamīg xrafstarān abar hišt* {*owōn astōmand aziš be hambūst hēnd xrafstar ī*} *gazāg ī wišōmand.* Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 16.1–2, 22.1. A bit more distant, but still related, is *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.31.

50 *Greater Bundahišn* 22.1: *gowēd pad dēn kū Gannag-Mēnōg ka andar dwārist wiš ī xrafstarān ud waxš ī bazag čiyōn mār ud gazdumb ud karbunag ud mōr ud magas ud mayg ud abārīg az ēn šōn was marag abāg āb ud zamīg ud urwar andar gumēxt.*

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The text develops an extremely complex narrative, detailing how the lethal matter initially contained in verminous creatures penetrated and adulterated the elements of Ohrmazd's creation. Of particular importance is Ahriman's assault on the primordial plant, as this is the first time his violence falls on living creatures. The account of the *Bundahišn* is brief, but revealing: "The Evil Spirit bore poison over the plant. All at once it dried up."[51]

Behind this terse statement lies a complex cosmology, in which moisture is theorized as an essential quality necessary to all animate beings.[52] Poison, then, is the antithesis of moisture: the primordial agent of desiccation that introduces destructive processes of withering, corruption, pulverization and death. Salvaging life (not just plants, but also animals and humans, who depend on plants and moisture) thus begins with a process of rehydration that does not solve the problem in definitive fashion, but ameliorates, contains, and displaces it.[53] Before we can follow this narrative, however, a bit more philological work is in order.

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51 Ibid. 4.17: *u-š urwar zahr owōn abar burd <kū> ham-zamān be hōšīd.* Cf. *Zād Spram* 2.6–7. Note that Pahlavi has two near-synonymous terms for poison: *wiš* (< Avestan *viš-, viša-*) and *zahr* (< Avestan **jantar-*, "smiter, killer, producer of death"). Although one might distinguish between them by translating one as "poison" and the other "venom," their ideology and semantics make them so close as to be interchangeable in all contexts except physiological discussions of the bodily humors, where *wiš* and never *zahr* is used to denote "bile," as in *Zād Spram* 30.14–16 and *Dēnkard* 7.4.90. The extended form *zahrag*, however, denotes "gall bladder" (*Greater Bundahišn* 28.18, *Zād Spram* 30.15–16 and 29).

52 See such texts as *Dēnkard* 3.105, 3.142, 3.157.18, 3.162, and 3.390. *Greater Bundahišn* 11b lists the seventeen kinds of moisture, all of them life sustaining.

53 *Škend Gumānīg Wizār* 4.17–20 goes further than the *Bundahišn* in its analysis and treats the diffusion of poison through the material creation as part of Ohrmazd's plan, whereby evil must first be contained before it can be destroyed.

> The four Ohrmazdian elements keep the lying poison of verminous creatures enveloped (lit: clothed). Because if this lying poison was not ensnared within the four Ohrmazdian corporeal elements, which are water, fire, earth, and air, it would be as if they came to the spiritual state of the sky. If they attained a spiritual and incorporeal state, the creatures of the Wise Lord could not avoid or escape their demonic poison, which is thus kept in captivity. And if it were mixed that way, the ordering, behavior, increase, and growth of humans and other creatures would not be possible.
>
> *druzīg zahr ī xrafstarīg kē cahār zahagān ī Ohrmazdīg paymōxt dārēnd. cē agar ēn drujīg zahr ī xrafstarān ō cahār zahagān ī tanigardīg ī Ohrmazdīg, ī hast āb ud ātaxš ud gil ud wād, pēcīd nē estēnd, ham ciyōn ō asmān mēnōg mad hēnd. agar pad mēnōgīh ud atanīh būd hēnd ān dām ī Ohrmazd pahrēxtan rastan az ān ī awēšān zahr ī dēwīg nē šāyast hē andar grawīh, ud agar ōwōn gumēxt hād ī mardōm abārīg dām winnārišn, barišn, abzāyišn, waxšišn nē šāyast hād.*

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4

Within the Younger Avesta, the hymn most concerned with issues of hydrology is that devoted to Tištriia (= Sirius), which associates this star's annual reappearance with victory over the demon Drought (*Apaoša-*) and the coming of seasonal rains.[54] Later authors showed particular interest in a verse from this text that states:

> We sacrifice to the bright,
> glorious star Tištriia (Sirius),
> who washes away all *sima*-s
> drifting in water, who sprinkles
> and heals all creatures.[55]

I have left the term *sima-* untranslated, since its meaning is unclear and none of its occurrences permits secure interpretation.[56] In his *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Christian Bartholomae rendered its use as a substantive "horror" and as an adjective "horrid," which is possible, but not compelling.[57] More recently, Antonio Panaino has argued that translation by "filth" better suits the verb of which *sima-* is the object in this verse: *naēg-*, "to wash away."[58] Like us, later Zoroastrian priests wavered between these two senses, while also associating *sima-* to poison, based on its occurence in *Yasna* 9.30, a verse we mentioned above.

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54 Most fully on this hymn, see Antonio Panaino, *Tištrya*, 2 vols. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990–95) and Bernhard Forssman, "*Apaoša*, der Gegner des Tištrya," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 82 (1968): 37–61.

55 *Yašt* 8.43:
tištrīm stārəm raēuuaṇtəm
⁺xᵛarənaŋhuṇtəm yazamaide
yō vīspāiš naēnižaiti simå
apaiia važədriš uxšiieiti
vīspåsə.tå dāmąn baēšaziiaitica.

56 *sima-* occurs as an adjective in *Yasna* 9.30, *Yašt* 13.105 and 136; its sole occurence as a substantive is in the present verse.

57 Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., col. 1580: "Greuel" and "Grauen erweckend; greulich," respectively.

58 Panaino, *Tištrya*, op cit., 1: 67 and 133.

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> Smite with your mace, O golden Haoma, the body of the yellow, *sima-*, poison-spraying serpent, for the sake of the righteous one who is being destroyed![59]

Although no relation exists between Tištriia, vermin, and poison in the Avesta, by reading *Yašt* 8.43 in connection with *Yasna* 9.30 (based on the occurrence of *sima-* in both), the later tradition made the dog-star responsible for killing vermin, unleashing their poison, and trying to clean up the subsequent mess. The *Greater Bundahišn* introduces this set of episodes by observing that on the day of Ahriman's assault, Tištriia was ascendant in Cancer, a watery constellation, causing torrential rain.[60]

> In that rain, every drop was as large as a big bowl of water. Over all the earth, the water stood as high as a man's height. The vermin of the earth were all killed by that rain, except a few of the winged ones and those who burrowed into the earth … The dead vermin remained in the earth, and their poison and stench were mixed up in the earth.[61]

Lethal matter now contaminates the earth itself, threatening to dry and render it sterile when the flood waters recede. To avoid this, Tištriia introduced the process of evaporation and re-precipitation, anticipating the annual cycle of wet and dry seasons.

> Having taken up the water in a cloud container (they speak thus concerning the means of accomplishing that deed), it rained much harder in drops the size of a bull's head, a man's head, or a fistful, more or less … He made it rain that way for ten days and nights. The poison of the vermin was all within the earth and it mixed into the water and made the water saltier, since the seed from which vermin are always conceived remained within the earth.[62]

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59 *Yasna* 9.30: *paiti ažōiš zairitahe simahe vīšō.vaēpahe kəhrpəm nāšəmnāi ašaone, haoma zāire, vadarə jaiδi.*

60 *Greater Bundahišn* 6b.2–5.

61 *Greater Bundahišn* 6b.6–9: *ān wārān har(w) srešk-ē(w) čand ī tašt-ē(w) wuzurg {āb hndw'c (?) abar} wašt hamāg zamīg mard bālāy āb be estād. ān xrafstārān ī zamīg hamāg pad ān wārān be ōzad {bērōn ōzārāk ī parrwar* $^{+}$*ud kē} pad sūragīhā ī zamīg andar šud hēnd.... ān xrafstar ī murdag pad zamīg andar mānd u-š wiš ud gandagīh pad zamīg abar gumēxt.* Cf. *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 8c.4, *Zād Spram* 3.14–18.

62 Ibid. 6b.14–16: *pas <Tištar> pad* $^{+}$*abr xumb paymānīg ī abzār ī ān kār ēdōn gōwēnd āb abar stad ud čand škefttar wārēnīd pad srešk ī gāw sar* $^{+}$*mard sar {šast zahā} mušt zahā meh-iz ud keh-iz.... u-š dah šab ud rōz pad ān ēwēnag wārān kard. ān wiš ī xrafstarān ī andar zamīg*

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Poison now moves from earth to water, which it corrupts by turning it salty. This is consistent with poison's effect on plants, in that salt is a potent drying agent. The admixture of poison thus effectively transforms the pure, sweet, life-sustaining water of the Wise Lord's creation into its own antithesis: a fluid that dehydrates any living creature unfortunate enough to drink it.

Having used, and then corrupted water in his attempts to rescue plants from vermin and earth from poison, Tištriia next employs wind to rescue water from salt by blowing the salt into the seas, creating some bodies of pure water and others that serve as filters and purifiers.[63] The attempt succeeds only in part, however, as stagnation, pollution, and salt remain widespread. What is more, the wind, uniformly beneficent in its original form, is divided in the process, such that certain winds become dry, cold, foul, and deadly.[64] When these enter the human body via processes of respiration, they introduce destructive substances and powers.

> Since the wind of sin is in the world, just as it is in the body of mortals, when the wind of sin is in their veins for the sake of corrupting their blood, the wind of life-breath[65] is not able to come and go. The body then feels pain and the life-breath seeks separation from it. When this becomes oppressive, the wind of life-breath disobeys and the body dies. The more mixed the wind is with the wind of sin, the more oppressive it becomes.[66]

---

būd hamāg andar ān āb be gumēxt ān āb mahisttar sōr be kard. čē andar zamīg be mānd az ān tōhmag xrafstar hamē hambūsīhēnd. Cf. Greater *Bundahišn* 21a.1, 21c.1–3.

63 *Greater Bundahišn* 6b.3, 6b.8, 6b.17, and 21c.1–3. The broader discussions of chapter 10 and 21a, which respectively treat the relation between fresh and salt waters, fair and foul winds, are also relevant. See also *Zād Spram* 3.8–21, 3.33, and 34.53.

64 *Greater Bundahišn* 21a.1–3:

> [The wind] tore apart the poison that the Foul Spirit had mixed into the earth and plants, swept it up with strong water and made the seas from it. Then the demons went up in conflict with the wind from behind. They defiled and confused the wind also. Then the wind did not come in its proper being with full strength to every world-region, but became subdivided.
>
> *wazīd u-š ān wiš az ham darrīd ī Gan(n)āg-Mēnōg andar zamīg ud urwar gumēxt čiyōn-iš pad nērōg āb mušt ud zrēhīhā aziš kard. pas dēwān az pas ī wād pad kō(x)šišn abar be raft hēnd u-šān wād-iz āhōgēnīd ud stard be kard. pas wād pad xwēš ⁺stī pad ān tagīgīh pad hamāg kišwar nē āmad ud kardag kardag be būd.*

65 The phrase *wād ī gyānīg* is best understood to denote the act of inhalation (literal inspiration), whereby life-sustaining oxygen moves from the wind or atmosphere (*wād* in its macrocosmic sense) into the lungs, as it becomes breath (*wād* in its microcosmic sense). *gyānīg*, for its part, is the adjective formed from *gyān*, which denotes the life-breath or vital spirit.

66 *Greater Bundahišn* 21e.9: *cē wād ī bazag andar gēhān owōn ciyōn andar tan ī mardōmān ka-šān wād ī bazag winastagīh ī ⁺xōn rāy pad ragān be estēd ud wād ī gyānīg āmadan ud*

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Later Zoroastrianism thus theorizes creation as permeated by poisonous substances that have the power to block the flows of moisture and air requisite for the sustenance of life. These poisons are not evenly distributed, however. They are concentrated in certain plants (aconite or wolfbane, marking nut, e.g.),[67] animals (snakes, scorpions, ants, flies, et al.),[68] bodies of water (stagnant ponds, salt-water oceans),[69] pieces of earth ("poison-stones," *zahr-muhragīhā*),[70] foods (those that are foul-smelling and bring sickness),[71] also some people (foreign invaders)[72] and bodily fluids (black and yellow bile).[73] In these and other forms, poison continues to compromise the perfection desired and initially created by the Wise Lord, making the world a dangerous place.

5

Absent from the Older Avesta, vermin and poison first appear in a few verses of the Younger Avesta, whose authors were led to reflect on these topics by creative mis-readings of *Yasna* 34.5c (in which they mistook adjectival *xrafstra-* for a substantive) and *Yasna* 49.11c (whose "evil foods" [*akāiš xᵛarəϑāiš*] they took to be poison [*viša-*]). Such misreadings are the product of a priestly tradition that focused intense attention on a small textual corpus, whose linguistic intricacies were only imperfectly controlled by its dedicated hermeneutes. Their philological errors proved fertile, however, opening lines of speculation the authors of the *Bundahišn* and other Pahlavi texts developed more fully, aided by their own productive mis-readings of *Yašt* 8.43 and *Yasna* 9.30 (whose "horrors" or "filth" [*sima-*] they associated with vermin and poison).

šudan nē tuwān ud ān tan dard ōšmārēd ud gyān wizār xwāhēd. ka stahmag bawēd wād ī gyānīg spōzēd ud tan mīrēd. cand wad-āmēzišnīh wēš wād ī bazag stahmagtar.

67 Ibid. 16.2. The species named in the passage are *Semecarpus anacardium* and *Anacardium orientale*, both quite deadly.

68 Ibid 22.1, 22.19.

69 *Zād Spram* 3.17–18.

70 *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 64.3.

71 *Dēnkard* 5.14.5, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.187–91.

72 In its description of the "those from the east of the lowest stock" (*az kustag ī xwarāsān, ān ī nidom-tōhmag*) who overrun Iran, *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 4.4 describes them as people "whose urine is poison" (*pēšyār-wiš*). Similarly, *Zād Spram* 33.19 identifies one Arab who had the ability to project poison from his eyes.

73 *Zād Spram* 30.14–16. The term we translate as "bile" is the same term used for "poison" (*wiš*).

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Their speculative labors along these lines prompted a major revision of Zoroastrian cosmogony and cosmology, while also effecting profound changes in ethics. By reconceptualizing evil in distinctly materialist terms – as a lethal substance, rather than a destructive disposition, temptation, or spirit – the later priesthood shifted questions of morality and the good life from metaphysics to physics, from the interiority of persons to the nature, value, effects and dangers of things. Such a shift mandated, inter alia, profound concern to protect not only one's bodily self, but the purity of earth, water, fire, plants, and animals from attack by noxious creatures and contamination by destructive substances, both of which corrupt and destroy the physical integrity (*hauruuatāt*) and immortality (*amərətat*) the Wise Lord intended for all his creatures. To defend against such dangers, a number of ritual and ethical practices are enjoined, all of a material, rather than strictly verbal or spiritual nature. Among the most important of these, perhaps, are complex systems of purificatory ablutions, exquisite care in the disposal of corpses, and priestly campaigns to exterminate vermin.[74]

One would very much like to know whether this shift took place during the Sassanian era, when Zoroastrians triumphed over those they defined as evil, acquiring vast territory and wealth in the process, or in post-Sassanian times, when the tide was reversed. Given the nature of the Pahlavi texts, which were committed to writing centuries after the Arab conquest, but drew on the Sassanian Avesta and oral traditions of indeterminate date, both contexts are possible and one can well imagine how the specific concerns of each era might have prompted, supported, and benefitted from this materialist reorientation of the ethical.

74 With regard to purification and the handling of corpses, see Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989) and Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras. 3: Rituale* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2004), pp. 204–45 ("Bestattungsanlagen") and 293–96 ("Reinheitsvorschriften und Reinigungsrituale"). On aggression against vermin, as attested by Herodotus 1.140 and the piece of priestly equipment the Avesta calls a "vermin-killer" (*xrafstra-gan-*, *Vīdaēuudāt* 14.8 and 18.2), see Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 338–42.

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CHAPTER 5

Before Religion? The Zoroastrian Concept of *Daēnā* and Two Myths about It

1

Over the past quarter century, the "linguistic turn" in scholarship, coupled with a belated drive for self-critical reflexivity has led some colleagues to question our lazy habit of using the term "religion" in pre-modern and non-western contexts where it carries assumptions that may be unjustified, inappropriate, and misleading; sufficiently so that some have urged the term's abandonment altogether.[1] Well-intentioned though this suggestion might be, it strikes me as misguided, since it exaggerates the problem, proposes a solution that only displaces the difficulty, and fails to comprehend some basic principles of semiotics, mistaking a problem inherent to language for one specific to the word "religion."

1 This chapter was originally published in Kambiz GhaneaBassiri and Paul Robertson, eds., *All Religion is Inter-Religion: Engaging the Work of Steven M. Wasserstrom* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 77–86. Inter alia, see Ernst Feil, *Religio: Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs*, 4 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986–2007), Michel Despland and Gérard Vallée, eds., *Religion in History: The Word, the Idea, the Reality* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1992), Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), William E. Arnal, "Definition," in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 21–34, Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), idem, *Discourse on Civility and Barbarity: A Critical History of Religion and Related Concepts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion*, trans. William Sayers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003; French original, 1998), Catherine Bell, "Paradigms Behind (and Before) the Modern Concept of Religion," *History and Theory* 46 (2006): 27–46, Craig Martin, *Masking Hegemony: A Genealogy of Liberalism, Religion, and the Private Sphere* (London: Equinox, 2010), Russell McCutcheon, "Religion before 'Religion'?" in Panyotis Pachis and Donald Wiebe, eds., *Chasing Down Religion: Essays in Honor of Luther H. Martin* (Thessaloniki: Barbounakis, 2010), pp. 285–301, Giovanni Casadio, "*Religio* versus Religion," in Jitse Dijkstra, et al., eds., *Myths, Martyrs, and Modernity: Studies in the History of Religions in Honour of Jan Bremmer* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2010), pp. 301–26, Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of A Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), as well as the pioneer work of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York: MacMillan, 1963).

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Most importantly, the absence of a signifier does not imply the absence of the signified. Although Sumerian has no word for "oxygen," one may presume the substance was present and it is no mistake – also no act of cultural imperialism – to speak of the Trobriand "economy," even if there be no readily comparable indigenous term. Surely, critics are right when they observe that "religion" is *our* term,[2] but they often confuse two senses the pronoun might have. Thus, if "our" includes all anglophones, an imprecise vernacular term is at issue, in which Protestantism looms large and which is increasingly inappropriate for examples as they deviate from that model.

If, however, the "our" is restricted to academic specialists, we are dealing with a technical (or etic) term, ideally the product of rigorous definitional labor that draws on a great many widely divergent examples. Signifiers of this sort, whether neologisms or common terms that have been reworked and repurposed, operate at a sufficiently high level of abstraction to encompass all members of the category they name, identifying the salient features they share, while allowing for wide variation in their particularities.

Provided that "our" use of the word *religion* is technical and not vernacular, it strikes me as defensible, but admittedly imperfect and precarious to the extent that we a) base our definition on an inadequate number of examples; b) confer disproportionate privilege to some examples, while ignoring others; and c) misconstrue some examples by assimilating them to the ones we know better and the models we base upon them. For all these reasons, our terms, categories, definitions and theories always remain provisional at best, desperately needing the challenges and refinements that come from considering new examples and rethinking the old ones.

2

Accordingly, I propose to treat an emic datum found in the Zoroastrian scriptures, which has entered theoretical discussions only infrequently and superficially. This is the Avestan noun *daēnā*, which resembles English "religion" in many ways and has often been translated as such.[3] Intriguingly, however,

2 A point stressed, above all by Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), "Religion, Religions, Religious," in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studie*s (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 269–84, and *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

3 Recent translators have offered the following definitions: "religion" (Enrico G. Raffaelli, *The Sīh-rōzag in Zoroastrianism: A Textual and Historico-Religious Analysis* [New York:

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lexicographers early recognized fluctuations in the usage of this term that make it difficult to arrive at a single, unified definition. Christian Bartholomae, author of the standard reference dictionary, was so troubled by this that he posited two different (homophonic and homographic) nouns. For one – [1]*daēnā*,

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Routledge, 2014]: 256); "view/view-soul" (Helmut Humbach and Klaus Faiss, *Zarathuštra and his Antagonists. A Sociolinguistic Study with English and German Translations of his Gāthās* [Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2010], passim); "belief, vision, conception, religion" (Almut Hintze, *A Zoroastrian Liturgy. The Worship in Seven Chapters* (*Yasna 35–41*) [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007], p. 337); "conscience religieuse; désigne tout à la fois la religion mazdéenne, déifiée comme fille de Mazdā, et la conscience religieuse d'un individu en particulier duquel c'est une part immortelle au même titre que l'âme"" (Éric Pirart, *L'éloge mazdéen de l'ivresse. Édition, traduction et commentaire du Hōm Stōd* [Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004], p. 291); "religiöse Anschauung" (Almut Hintze, *Der Zamyād-Yašt. Edition, Übersetzung, Kommentar* [Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1994], p. 432); "(religiöse) Anschauung, conscience" (Jean Kellens and Éric Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques: Vol. II: Répertoires grammaticaux et lexique* [Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1990], p. 252); "religious view, religion" (Helmut Humbach and Pallan R. Ichaporia, *Zamyād Yasht. Yasht 19 of the Younger Avesta: Text, Translation, Commentary* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998], p. 183). Andrea Piras, *Hādōxt Nask 2: Il racconto zoroastriano della sorte dell' anima. Edizione critica del testo avestico e pahlavi, traduzione e commento* [Rome: Istituto per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2000] transliterates and leaves *daēnā* untranslated. The specialized studies devoted to this term are Samuel Grant Oliphant, "Sanskrit *dhénā*, Avestan *daēnā*, Lithuanian *dainà*," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 32 (1912): 393–413, Maurice Bloomfield, "On Vedic *Dhénā*, 'Prayer,' 'Song'," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 46 (1926): 303–8, J.H. Kramers, "The *Daēnā* in the Gathas," in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Curtseji Erachji Pavry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 232–37, Marijan Molé, "*Daēnā*, le pont Činvat et l'initiation dans le Mazdéisme," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 157 (1960): 155–85, Boris Oguibenine, "Baltic Evidence and the Indo-Iranian Prayer," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 2 (1974): 23–45, idem, "Védique *dhénā*, avestique *daēnā*: examen des critiques de H.P. Schmidt," *Lautgeschichte und Etymologie* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1980), pp. 293–316, Hans-Peter Schmidt, "Is Vedic *Dhénā* related to Avestan *Daēnā*?," in *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg. Vol II* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 165–81, Carsten Colpe, "*Daēnā*, Lichtjungfrau, Zweite Gestalt. Verbindungen und Unterschiede zwischen zarathustrischer und manichäischer Selbst-Anschauung," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp. 58–77, Gherardo Gnoli, "Über die *Daēnā*: Haδōxt Nask 2.7–9," in Christoph Elsass et al., eds., *Tradition und Translation: Zum Problem der interkulturellen Überstetzbarkeit religiöser Phänomene. Festschrift für Carsten Colpe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), pp. 292–98, Wojciech Skalmowski, "Some Remarks on Avestan *Daēnā*," in Jan Quaegebeur, ed., *Studia Paulo Naster Oblata. Vol. II Orientalia Antiqua* (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), pp. 223–29, Geo Widengren, "La rencontre avec la *Daēnā*, qui représente les actions de l'homme," *Orientalia Romana* 5 (1983): 41–79, Firouz-Thomas Lankarany, *Daēnā im Awesta, eine semantische Untersuchung* (Reinbek: Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 1985), Jean Kellens, "La fonction aurorale de Mithra et la Daēnā," in John R. Hinnells, ed., *Studies in Mithraism* (Rome "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1994), pp. 165–71, and Mansour Shaki, "Dēn," in Ehsan Yarshater, ed., *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983–) Vol. 7: 279–81, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/den (original article 1994; last updated 2011). Discussions of the concept are also included in most general works

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in his notation – he offered the definition "Religion,"[4] as in passages like the following, where it signifies a body of discourse and practice that adherents accept as authoritative, as well as profoundly important.

> As a Mazdā-worshipper, a Zoroastrian, and one opposed to the demons, I embrace your religion, O Righteous Wise Lord.[5]

> I who am Zarathuštra, may I lead the chiefs of households, clans, tribes, and lands to follow in their thoughts, words, and deeds the religion which is Ahuric and Zoroastrian.[6]

As "religion," Bartholomae's *¹daēnā* can also be used to signal the community that shares practices and discourse, constructing its identity with reference to these, as in passages that describe the need for one "co-religionist" (*hāmō.daēnā*, literally "one of the same religion") to support another,[7] or that distinguish the responsibilities of those who "have pledged to and been instructed in the Mazdā-worshipping religion" from those who have not.[8] A few Avestan passages also make *daēnā* the particular concern of a specialized institution.[9] Witness an utterance attributed to the Wise Lord (*Ahura Mazdā*) himself.

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on Zoroastrianism, such as Herman Lommel, *Die religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dargestellt* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1930), pp. 148–52, H.S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, trans. H.H. Schaeder (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1938), pp. 114–20, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 229–31, Marijan Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran Ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), passim (see listings in the index, pp. 559–60), Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965), pp. 38–39 and 95–96, Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Vol. I: The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 237–40 and Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras. Vol. 1: Geschichte* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002), pp. 124–25, 146–49, and 340. More recent and more detailed discussions include Andrea Piras, "Le concezioni dell' anima nell' Iran antico," *I Quaderni di Avallon* 29 (1992): 45–48, Philippe Gignoux, *Man and Cosmos in Ancient Iran* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001), pp. 12–16 and Éric Pirart, *Corps et âmes du Mazdéen. Le lexique zoroastrien de l'eschatologie individuelle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012), pp. 121–79.

4 Christian Bartholomae, *Altiransches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1904), columns 662–65.

5 *Visprad* 5.3: *frā tē vərəne ahe daēnaiia ašāum ahura mazda mazdaiiasnō zaraϑuštrīš vīdaēuuō.*

6 *Yasna* 8.7 (= Yasna 60.10): *haxšaiia azəmciṯ yō zaraϑuštrō*
fratəmą nmānanąmca vīsąmca zaṇtunąmca daxiiunąm
aŋhå daēnaiiå anumataiiaēca anuxtaiiēca anuuarštaiiaēca yā āhūiriš zaraϑuštriš.

7 *Vīdaēuudāt* 4.44: *narō hāmō.daēna.*

8 *Vīdaēuudāt* 3.40: *āstūtō vā aiβisrauuanō vā daēnąm māzdaiiasnīm.*

9 On the position of priests within ancient Iranian society, see Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien*, op cit., pp. 229–31, Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie*, op cit., 115–18 and

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> I summon priests, who have the greatest wisdom of the Mazdā-worshipping religion to be leaders/models and I summon their teachers also.[10]

Daēnā thus includes the four domains I treated as constitutive of "religion" in the technical definition I offered a decade ago: discourse, practice, community, and institution.[11] In some passages of the Avesta, however, Bartholomae recognized something that falls outside these domains, which he took to be so different from "religion" that he posited a separate word – *²daēnā* – which he defined as "Inner being, spiritual self, individuality."[12] More recent research supports Bartholomae's identification of an individual *daēnā* in numerous passages, but sees no need to posit a separate lexeme.[13] Thus, in the most comprehensive monograph devoted to this topic, Firouz-Thomas Lankarany concluded that a single Avestan signifier references two related, but distinguishable signifieds: "religion" (for Bartholomae's *¹daēnā*) and "religiosity" (for his *²daēnā*), as in the following examples.[14]

423–25, Widengren *Dir Religionen Irans*, op cit., pp. 27–28, Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. I, op cit., pp. 5–13.

10 *Yasna* 13.3: *mazištāiš vaēdiiāiš daēnaiiå māzdaiiasnōiš aϑaurunō ratūm āmruiiē cašānąscā aēšąmcīt āmruiiē.*

11 Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 5–7. The crucial parts of the definition are these:

> A proper definition must be polythetic and flexible, allowing for wide variations and attending, at a minimum, to these four domains: 1) A discourse whose concerns transcend the human, temporal, and contingent, and that claims for itself a similarly transcendent status; 2) A set of practices whose goal is to produce a proper world and/or proper human subjects, as defined by a religious discourse to which these practices are connected; 3) A community whose members construct their identity with reference to a religious discourse and its attendant practices; 4) An institution that regulates religious discourse, practices, and community, reproducing them over time and modifying them as necessary, while asserting their eternal validity and transcendent value.

12 Bartholomae, *Altiransche Wörterbuch*, op cit., columns 665–67: "inneres Wesen, geistiges Ich, Individualität."

13 Thus, for instance, Pirart, *Corps et âmes du mazdéen*, op cit., or Shaul Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994), p. 136:

> The semantic ambiguity of *daēnā* is quite typical of the Iranian religious language, and should not have evoked so much scholarly consternation. It does incorporate within it the notions of "soul" as well as that of an outside manifestation of one's self; of "religion" in both its subjective sense, as the sum total of one's religous attitude and actions, and its objective sense, as the collective attitude of a whole community and also as a representation of that collective attitude.

14 Thus Lankarany *Daēnā im Awesta*, op cit., p. 170: "*den subjectiven Begriff Religiosität im Sinne einer individuellen vom Menschen gelebten und praktizierten Religion.*" Lankarany

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This I ask you, tell me rightly, Lord:
How should I perfect the religiosity that is mine?[15]

He who establishes a better and a worse mind, O Wise One,
Who establishes a better and worse religiosity with his action and speech,
Whose will follows his preferences and choices –
He should have a different existence at the end.[16]

Apparently, Zoroastrians theorized things more broadly than I did by including a personal "religiosity" alongside the more collective aspects of "religion." It remains to be seen how they understood this.

3

Although the classic phenomenologists of religion generally took religiosity to be a foundational part of the innermost self and an innate attunement to the sacred that provides the basis for the development of collective religions,[17] Avestan accounts suggest something different. Thus, a few texts tell that the Wise Lord initially put religiosity in people,[18] but this is only a potential that

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further maintains that the Older Avesta knows this sense only and that a model of religion as an objective, rather than a subjective entity emerges only in the Younger Avesta. Given that many verses of the older stratum are quite ambiguous in their usage and remain open to multiple divergent interpretations, this part of his argument is less than fully convincing.

15 *Yasna* 44.9ab: *taṯ ϑβā pərəsā, ərəš mōi vaocā ahurā*
kaϑā mōi yąm, yaoš daēnąm yaožδānē.
For translation of the verb *yaožδā-* as "to perfect," rather than "to purify," see Chapter 19.

16 *Yasna* 48.4: *yā dāṯ manō, vahiiō mazdā ašiiascā*
huuō daēnąm, šiiaoϑanācā vacaŋhācā
ahiiā zaošāŋg, uštiš varənāŋg hacaitē
ϑβahmī ⁺*xratāu, apāməm nanā aŋhaṯ.*

17 Cf. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Huuman Nature* (New York, Longmans, Green, 1902), Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923; German original 1922), Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1938; German original 1933), Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958).

18 The Wise Lord's creation of the "first" *daēnā* is mentioned at *Yasna* 31.11 and 46.6, but not narrated in any detail. Instruction by priests and others is at issue in *Yasna* 19.17, 46.7, 46.11; *Vīdaēuudāt* 3.40–42, 9.2, 9.47–48, 9.52; *Yašt* 9.26, 11.14; and *Visprad* 12.3; self-cultivation at *Yasna* 9.31, 48.4, 49.5; *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.21, 5.62; and *Yašt* 16.15, 17.46, 19.79, 19.84.

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will be realized over the course of a life as the individual internalizes the values, dispositions, and habitus shared and promoted by the collective. Consider, for example, this prayer Zarathuštra is said to have offered as he sought his first converts.

> Grant me this boon: that I lead the good, well-born lady Hutaosā (wife of King Vištāspa, Zarathuštra's first convert and patron) to follow the religion in thought, to follow the religion in speech, to follow the religion in deed, so she may grasp and place in her heart my Mazdā-worshipping religion.[19]

Or this programmatic statement:

> We teach … words spoken rightly, Zoroastrian utterances, deeds done well, the preparation of ritual grounds in accordance with truth, the pressing of libations according to truth, sacrificial praise, Mazdā-worshipping religion, and what is thought, said, and done.[20]

As a potential, "religiosity" was considered inherent and god-given. For this to develop into "religion," however, society – which has logical and temporal precedence over the individual – has to instruct, monitor, cultivate, and discipline its individual members, leaving its imprint firmly upon them. *Daēnā* denotes both the incipient potential and its ultimate realization, the latter of which could be judged "good" or "bad,"[21] depending on the extent to which

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19 *Yašt* 9.26 (= 17.46): *dazdi.me vaŋuhi vəuuište … yaϑa azəm hācaiiene vaŋuhīm āzātąm Hutaosąm anumatāe daēnaiiāi anūxtāe daēnaiiāi anu.varštāe daēnaiiāi yā.mē daēnąm māzdaiiasnīm zrasca dāṯ apica aotāṯ …*

20 *Visprad* 12.2–3: *cīšmaide … aršuxδanąmca vacaŋhąm srauuaŋhąmca zaraϑuštrinąm huuarštanąmca šiiaoϑnanąm barəsmanąmca ašaiia frastarətanąm haomanąmca ašaiia hutanąm staotanąmca yesniianąm daēnaiiåsca māzdaiiasnōiš måϑβanąmca vaxəδβanąmca varštuuanąmca.*

21 References to "good religion" (*hu-daēnā* and "bad religion" (*duž-daēnā*, also *drəguuatō daēnā*, "the religion of liars") are found at *Yasna* 37.5, 49.4, 49.11, 51.13, 53.1, 65.7; *Yašt* 4.9, 5.109, 9.31, 19.47, 49, and 95; *Visprad* 3.3; *Pursišnīhā* 33; *Hādōxt Nask* 2.11, 12, 18, and 36. The distinction is also pointedly asserted in one of the most celebrated verses attributed to Zarathuštra, *Yasna* 45.2.

> I will proclaim the two first spirits of existence,
> The more beneficent of which could say to the one who is evil:
> "Neither our minds, nor our pronouncements, nor our intellects,
> Nor our choices, nor our utterances and deeds,
> Nor our religions, nor our souls are in agreement."

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a person's life conformed to the norms of what Zoroastrians call "the Good Religion" (*daēnā vaŋhuuī*).[22]

4

A myth preserved in several variants helps clarify the ways personal religion was theorized. These texts detail the fate of one's soul (*uruuan*) and one's religion (*daēnā*) following death of the material body. Picking up on the heterosexual complementarity of the two nouns (*uruuan* is masculine, *daēnā* feminine), the story has elements of allegory and romance.[23]

Thus, it is told that for three nights after death, the soul sits a bit anxiously beside the corpse, huddled in prayer and hoping for bliss. On the third morning, it feels a wind, more fragrant than any it has previously encountered.[24]

> Coming forth from this wind, there appears a maiden, who is his own religion (*daēnā*): a maiden whose form is beautiful, radiant, who is white-armed, strong, shapely, statuesque, tall, high-breasted, able-bodied, noble, of a rich lineage, fifteen years old in growth, with a form as beautiful as the most beautiful creatures.[25]

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at fravaxšiiā aŋhāuš uš mainiiū paouruiiē
yaiiå spaniiå ūitī mrauuat yəm angrəm
nōit nā manå nōit sāŋghā nōit xratauuō
naēdā varanā nōit uxδā naēda šıuaoθanā
nōit daēnå nōit uruuąnō hacaiŋtē.

22 Zoroastrianism calls itself "the Good Religion" already in the Older Avesta: *Yasna* 51.17, 53.1, and 53.4. The Younger Avesta usually expands the phrase and speaks of "the Good Mazdā-worshipping Religion" (*vaŋhvī daēnā māzdaiiasnī*): *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.13; *Visprad* 6.1, 7.2, 11.5; *Yasna* 1.13, 2.13, 3.15, 4.18, 6.12, 7.15, 9.26, 15.1, 16.6, 17.13, 22.3, 22.15, 22.22, 22,25, 24.8, 25.3, 25.6; *Yašt* 2.12, 13.94, 16.1; *Nyayiš* 1.8, et al.

23 The Younger Avesta contains variants of this narrative at *Hādōxt Nask* 2 and *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.28–34. Pahlavi variants include the Pahlavi version of the *Hādōxt Nask*, as well as *Arda Wirāz Nāmag* 4.7–14, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.123–57, *Greater Bundahišn* 30.8–34, *Dādēstan ī Dēnīg* 23–24, *Zād Spram* 30.42–52, and the much-discussed Sasanian inscription of Kirdīr at Naqš-ī Rustam. The relevant texts are conveniently assembled in Widengren, "La rencontre avec la *Daēnā*," op cit., who recognized anticipatory aspects of the theme in the Older Avesta, particularly *Yasna* 51.13 and 17.

24 *Hādōxt Nask* 2.2–8.

25 Ibid. 2.9: *aŋhå dim vātaiiå frārəŋta sadaiieiti yā hauua daēna kainīnō kəhrpa srīraiiå xšōiθniiå +auruša.bāzuuō amaiiå huraoδaiiå uzarštaiiå bərəzaitiiå ərəduuafšniiå sraotanuuō āzātaiiåraēuuasciθraiiå paṇcadasaiiå raoδaēšuua kəhrpa auuauuatō sraiiå yaθa dāmąn sraēštāiš.*

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In response to the question "What kind of maiden are you, you who have the most beautiful form of all the maidens I have ever seen?,"[26] the soul's visitor leaves no doubt regarding her nature: "Verily, I am the religion (*daēnā*) of your very own self, young man, you whose thoughts are good, whose words are good, whose deeds are good, and whose religion is good."[27] Expanding on this statement, she explains that everything this soul has thought, said, and done in life has contributed to her excellence and beauty. Here, the exposition of the Avestan text is less thorough than that of a Pahlavi variant, which develops the argument more fully.

> She who was his own religion (Pahlavi *dēn* < *daēnā*) gave this answer to him: "I am thus your deeds, O Youth, you whose thoughts are good, whose speech is good, whose deeds are good, and whose religion is good. Because of your desire and your deeds, I am great, good, fragrant, victorious and fearless, as is apparent to you. Because you recited the Gāthas [= the most sacred part of the Avesta] when you were in the material world, because you performed good sacrifices, tended the fire, and praised the truthful men who came from near and far, it had this effect: If I was shapely, I was made more shapely by you. If I was good, I was made better by you. If I was worthy, I was made worthier by you. If I was seated in a place of renown, I was seated in a more renowned place by you. And if I was praiseworthy, I was made more praiseworthy by you, by the good thought, good speech, and good actions you performed, O Righteous Man."[28]

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26 Ibid. 2.10: *cišca carāitiš ahi yąm it yauua carāitinąm kəhrpa sraēštąm dādarəsa*.

27 Ibid. 2.11: *azəm bā tē ahmi yum humanō huuacō hušiiaoϑana hudaēna yā hauua daēna xᵛaēpaiϑe.tanuuō*.

28 *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* 4.11–14: *u-š passox dād ān ī xwēš dēn ud ān xwēš kunišn kū: man ēdōn kunišn ī tō ham* ⁺*juwān ī xūb-menišn ī xūb-gōwišn ī xūb-kunišn ī xūb-dēn kāmag ud kunišn ī tō rāy ka man ēdōn meh ud weh ud hubōy ud pērōzgar ud abē-bēš ham ciyōn tō sahist cē tō pad gētīg gāhān srūd u-t ī weh yašt u-t ātaxš pahrēxt u-t mard ī ahlaw šnāyēnīd kē az dūr frāz mad kē az nazdīk ka man frabīh būd ham u-t frabīhtar kard ham ud nēk būd ham u-t nēktar kard ham ud arzānīg būd ham u-t arzānīgtar kard ham ud ka pad gāh cašmagān nišast ham u-t cašmagāhtar nišāst ham ud ka burzišnīg būd ham u-t burzišnigtar kard ham pad humat ud hūxt ud huwaršt ī tō warzīd tō mard ī ahlaw*. Cf. *Hādōxt Nask* 2.11–14, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.129–39, *Greater Bundahišn* 30.16, and *Dādēstan ī Dēnīg* 23.5. The last of these passages gives a much less thorough account than the others, but refers to the *dāenā*-maiden as "the guardian and treasurer of one's virtuous deeds" (*nigāhbed ud ganjwar ī kirbag*). Note that the kinds of actions the maiden singles out as particularly beneficial are all ritual, rather than ethical, as is true of the prime religious teachings listed in *Visprad* 12.2–3, quoted above.

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Having revealed her true nature, the maiden carries her partner to the highest heaven, where they are graciously received and will enjoy eternal bliss.[29] In precisely parallel terms, the texts also describe how the soul of a evil person is greeted upon death by a hideous hag who introduces herself as his religion, the product of all his bad thoughts, words, and deeds in life. After which she drags him to hell.[30]

In the image and, more explicitly, in the words of the two maidens, this myth describes the process of a person's religiosity becoming his (or her) religion. Whatever qualities were initially present as a potential were constantly made better and more beautiful, or uglier and worse by every aspect of the person's life, depending on how consistently his thought, speech, and conduct reproduced the ideals enjoined on him from childhood by the Zoroastrian priests, scriptures, and community. The moral of the story could not be more pointed. Religion is not a piece of one's life, but the totality. Throughout life one's *daēnā* is constantly under construction and every agentive undertaking, even the smallest, contributes to or detracts from its perfection, which can – and will – be judged by standards that an outsider recognizes as those of the community, but which the community identifies with the will of the deity and the nature of the cosmos.[31]

This is a rather different construction of "religion" than that to which we – scholars of religion, as well as moderns in general – are normally accustomed. Three features strike me as particularly noteworthy. First is the dialectic relation between religion's individual and collective instantiations, each of which is simultaneously dependent on and formative for the other. Second is the all-encompassing, all-pervasive expanse of the category, such that absolutely everything in life is permeated by and constitutive of the religious. Third is the way expectations of eschatological judgment recode a community's evaluation of its members as the inescapable workings of divine justice, a move that

29 *Hādōxt Nask* 2.15–18, *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.30–32 and 34, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* 5.1–9, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.145–57, *Greater Bundahišn* 30.22–23 and 26, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 23.6, *Zād Spram* 30.52.

30 *Hādōxt Nask* 2.19–36, *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.33, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.158–94, *Greater Bundahišn* 30.27–34, *Dādēstan ī Dēnīg* 24. *Zād Spram* 30.44 challenges the view common to these other texts, suggesting that the soul (Pahlavi *ruwān* < Avestan *uruuan*) of an evil-doer is unaccompanied by his religion or any other spiritual aspect of the person. Rejected and abandoned, "it goes to hell repentantly, all by itself, just like one who is surprised and faces his enemies" (*ruwān ān ī tanīg +pašēmānīhā +ēwtāg be ō dušōx šawēd ōwōn ciyōn kē +widimušt ēstēd dušmēnān*).

31 Eschatological rewards and punishments, dependent on the nature of one's religion are already thematized in the Older Avesta: *Yasna* 31.20, 46.11, 48.4, 51.13, 53.1 and 53.4 Rewards of an unspecified nature are also mentioned at *Yasna* 34.13, 40.1, 49.9 and 54.1.

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provides strong incentive for individuals to embrace everything the collective wishes to inculcate in them.

Given this Zoroastrian evidence (which finds powerful echoes elsewhere), I would now add a fifth domain to my definition, noting that "religion" also includes the subjectivities cultivated in and by members of a religious community, such that individuals' consciousness, values, and sense of identity come to conform with those of the group, a process facilitated by the expectation of rewards and punishments that are often represented as otherworldly, as well as worldly in nature.

5

A second myth provides further insight into Zoroastrian understandings of *daēnā*. This narrative speaks of Yima, a primordial king, during whose reign the world and humanity were closest to the ideal state the Wise Lord intended. As one Avestan text puts it, "In the reign of Yima, there was neither cold, nor heat; there was neither old age, nor death; nor envy, created by demons."[32] Yima's relation to religion, which determined that of humanity itself during his golden age, is reported in a dialogue between Zarathuštra and the deity.

> Zarathuštra asked the Wise Lord: "Wise Lord, most beneficent spirit, creator of truthful incarnate creatures, with whom among mortals did you who are the Wise Lord first converse, other than me, Zarathuštra? To whom did you reveal the religion which is Ahuric and Zoroastrian?"
>
> Then the Wise Lord answered: "O Truthful Zarathuštra, with fair Yima of good pastures – with him among mortals I who am the Wise Lord first conversed, other than you, Zarathuštra. To him I first revealed the religion that is Ahuric and Zoroastrian. Then I said to him, O Zarathuštra, I who am the Wise Lord: "Get ready, fair Yima, to be the rememberer and bearer of the religion." Then fair Yima gave me this response, O Zarathuštra: "I am neither created, nor prepared to be the rememberer and bearer of the religion."

32 *Yasna* 9.5: *yimahe xšaϑre auruuahe nōiṯ aotəm åŋha nōiṯ garəməm nōiṯ zauruua åŋha nōiṯ mərəϑiuš nōiṯ araskō daēuuō.dātō*. Other Avestan texts describing his golden age include *Yašt* 9.9–10, 15.16–17, 17.29–30, 19.32–33, and *Vīdaēuudāt* 2.4–5; Pahlavi texts, *Greater Bundahišn* 32.10, *Dēnkard* 3.227, 3.229, and 7.1.23, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 38.19, and *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 27.24–26.

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> Then I said to him, O Zarathuštra, I who am the Wise Lord: "If you are not ready, Yima, to be the rememberer and bearer of the religion, then make my creatures thrive, then make my creatures flourish, then prepare to be protector, preserver, and guardian of the creatures."
>
> Then fair Yima gave me this response, O Zarathuštra: "I will make your creatures thrive, I will make your creatures flourish, I am prepared to be protector, preserver, and guardian of the creatures. Let there be no cold wind in my kingdom, nor a hot one, nor disease, nor death."[33]

Can one without religion still make the world thrive? The myth suggests this may be possible, but only at the dawn of human history and even then, only for a while.[34] Ultimately, King Yima uttered a lie,[35] as a result of which he was usurped by a monstrous foreigner, chased into hiding, then found, killed, and dismembered by his own brother, as the world began its descent into conflict, confusion, and evil.[36] Only after many millennia of increasing woes did

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33 *Vīdaēuudāt* 2.1–5: *pərəsat zaraϑuštrō ahurəm mazdąm. ahura mazda mainiiō spəništa dātarə gaēϑanąm astuuaitinąm ašāum kahmāi paoiriiō mašiiānąm apərəsə.tūm yō ahurō mazdå aniiō mana yat zaraϑuštrāi. kahmāi fradaēsaiiō daēnąm yąm āhūirīm zaraϑuštrīm. 2. āat mraot ahurō mazdå. Yimāi srīrāi huuąϑāi ašāum zaraϑuštra ahmāi paoiriiō mašiiānąm apərəse azəm yō ahurō mazdå aniiō ϑβat yat zaraϑuštrāt ahmāi fradaēsaēm daēnąm yąm āhūirīm zaraϑuštrīm. 3. āat hē mraom zaraϑuštra azəm yō ahurō mazdå vīsaŋha mē yima srīra vīuuaŋhana mərətō bərətaca daēnaiiāi. āat mē aēm paitiiaoxta Yimō srīrō zaraϑuštra. nōit dātō ahmi nōit cistō mərətō bərətaca daēnaiiāi. 4. āat hē mraom zaraϑuštra azəm yō ahurō mazdå yezi mē yima nōit vīuuīse mərətō bərətaca daēnaiiāi āat mē gaēϑå frādaiia āat mē gaēϑå varəδaiia āat mē vīsāi gaēϑanąm ϑrātāca harətāca aiβiiāxštaca. 5. āat mē aēm paitiiaoxta yimō srīrō zaraϑuštra. azəm tē gaēϑå fraδaiieni azəm tē gaēϑå varəδaiieni azəm tē vīsāne gaēϑanąm ϑrātāca harətāca aiβiiāxštaca. nōit mana xšaϑre buuat aotō vātō nōit garəmō nōit axtiš nōit mahrkō*. Cf. *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 31c1–4, *Dēnkard* 3.12 and 3.129.

34 The Avestan sources (*Yašt* 9.10 and 17.30) report that Yima ruled for a millennium, while the Pahlavi sources (*Greater Bundahišn* 36.5, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 27.25) reduce this to six hundred sixteen years and six months.

35 The sources give slightly divergent accounts regarding the nature of Yima's lie, while agreeing on its consequences. Cf. *Yašt* 19.33–34, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 38.19–20, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 31a10, 31c.5–6, and 47.8.

36 On Yima's fate and the loss of the golden age, see *Yašt* 19.34 and 19.46, *Greater Bundahišn* 18.6, 33.1, and 35.5, *Zād Spram* 35.46, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 38.19–20, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 31a10, 31c.5–6, and 47.8. Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des iraniens. II^e partie: Jim* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1934) remains an absolutely classic treatment of all the major sources on Yima. More recently, see Helmut Humbach, "Yama/Yima/Jamšēd, King of Paradise of the Iranians," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 26 (2002): 68–77, Samra Azarnouche and Céline Redard, eds. *Yama/Yima: Variations indo-iraniennes sur la geste mythique* (Paris: De Boccard, 2012)

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the Wise Lord again attempt to bring religion into the world, this time with Zarathuštra as his chosen vehicle.

As the most perfect of priests, Zarathuštra is a more appropriate "rememberer and bearer" (*mərətō bərətaca*) for the religion than was Yima, most perfect of kings, but the world was not transformed immediately when he embraced the Good Religion. Rather, Zoroastrian ideology maintains that the collaboration of priesthood and kingship (righteousness and power) is required for religion to spread, flourish, and accomplish its goals, the support of both institutions being necessary and neither one sufficient in itself. This is expressed quite explicitly in texts like *Dēnkard* 3.129.

> The battle that is hardest for the Foul Spirit to win is one where the glory of kingship and the good religion come together in the highest degree in one person's body, because this unity would produce his destruction. If in Yima, the glory of sovereignty in the highest degree had come together with the glory of the Good Religion in even higher degree, or if in Zarathuštra, the glory of the Good Religion in the highest degree had come together with the glory of kingship in the highest degree, the Foul Spirit's destruction would be assured, as would the salvation of creatures from his assault, and the desired renovation would come into existence quickly.[37]

A full unpacking of Yima's relation to the religion would go well beyond what can be offered in the present context, since it speaks to the nature of kingship and the proper goals of political action; the extent of kings' competence and their need for priestly guidance; human fallibility and consequent estrangement from the divine; and a great many other themes. What interests me most, however, is the structured contrast the story draws between King Yima, who refused to accept religion, making himself vulnerable to falsehood and setting in motion processes of corruption and decadence, and Zarathuštra, the priest

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and Audrey Tzatourian, *Yima: Structure de la pensée religieuse en Iran ancien* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012).

37 *abar ān ī Gannāg Mēnōg kōxšišn padiš škafttar az nigēz ī wehdēn hēd ān ī Gannāg Mēnōg koxšišn padiš skafttar ēk abar xwarrah ī xwadāyīh ud wehdēn pad ēk tan abardar zōrīhā ō ham madan abesīhišn ī-š az ēn hamīh rāy cē agar pad Yim abāz ān abardar zōrīhā xwarrah ī xwādayīh abardar zōrīg-iz xwarrah ī wehdēn āyab pad Zarduxšt abāz abardar zōrīg ī xwarrah ī wehdēn xwarrah-iz ī abardar zōrīhā ciyōn pad Yim būd ō ham madan hē tēz Gannāg Mēnōg abesīhišn dām az ēbgat bōxtagīh ud frašgird pad kāmag andar axwān dahišn būd hē.*

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TABLE 5.1 Eras of cosmic history, as implied in the myth of Yima's rejection of the religion (*Vīdaēuudāt* 2.1–5)

	Era of Cosmic History	Need for religion	Presence of religion	Reason
I	from Creation until Yima's lie	–	–	The world is (nearly) perfect
II	from Yima's lie until Zarathuštra	+	–	As king, Yima is unable and unwilling to accept the Wise Lord's offer
III	from Zarathuštra until Ahriman's defeat	+	+	As priest (and prophet), Zarathuštra accepts the Wise Lord's offer and propagates the Good Religion
IV	Eternity following Ahriman's defeat	–	–	The world is perfectly perfect

and the founder, who accepted the religion Yima had earlier rejected, making truth available, thereby reversing the process of decline and moving the world toward salvation.[38] To put things more schematically, the myth divides cosmic history into four eras, in which the relation of humans to religion varies dramatically (Table 5.1).

38 Recently, Antonio Panaino, "Yima ed il 'rifiuto' della *daēnā-*. Ovvero dell' incestualità, della beatitudine e della morte tra ambigui ostacoli e seducenti trasparenze," in Philippe Swennen, ed., *Démons iraniens. Actes du colloque international … à l'occasion des 65 ans de Jean Kellens* (Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2015), pp. 97–123 has offered an ingenious and radical, but unconvincing reinterpretation of this text, based on his sense "If Yima had really refused the Mazdean religion, Ahura Mazdā would have surely annihilated him" (p. 97). Alberto Cantera, "Yima, son *vara-* et la *daēnā* mazdéenne," in Azarnouche and Redard, *Yama/Yima*, op cit., pp. 45–47 has shown the philological problems in Panaino's attempt, while developing an alternative reinterpretation that stresses the importance of sacrifice as the essence of religious action and thus of religion. While the point is well taken and helps correct ethnocentric and anachronistic overemphasis on belief and interiority, the corrective is overstated. As the *Hādōxt Nask* and other texts make clear, *daēnā* includes all of one's thoughts, speech, and action, including not only ritual, but ethical and quotidian forms.

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Rather than imagining religion as something eternal, inevitable, ubiquitous, and necessary, Zoroastrianism theorizes *daēnā* as contingent: sometimes present, sometimes not, sometimes needed, but often unnecessary. According to this story, religion entered human history relatively late and humanity thrived for a long time, having no interest in or need for religion, until Yima's lie compromised the conditions of existence. With that lie, confusion, corruption, and strife entered our world, putting an end to the golden age, introducing death and all other ills. In these circumstances – which are emphatically theorized as reversible – religion provides moral guidance, ritual knowledge, comforting reassurance, and saving grace. Above, all, it is human mortality that creates a need for the guidance, solace, and reassurance that religion is uniquely able to provide. Once cosmic perfection has been secured, however, and mortality ended, it is expected that religion can and will disappear.

6

Consistent with "our" tendency to theorize religion in ways that implicitly take Protestantism as the model, emphasizing doctrinal commitment and ethico-philosophical outlook, most experts on Zoroastrianism have accepted an etymology that derives *daēnā* from the verbal root ^{2}*dāy-* (< Indo-Iranian **dī-*), "to see."[39] Accordingly, a variety of interpretations have been offered that, notwithstanding different nuances, make *daēnā* primarily an internal and intellectual experience, e.g. "the religious vision,"[40] "vision(-soul),"[41]

39 This etymology is accepted, inter alia, by Oliphant, "Sanskrit *dhénā*, Avestan *daēnā*, Lithuanian *dainà*," op cit., p. 412, Bloomfield, "On Vedic *Dhénā*," op cit., pp. 304–5, Herman Lommel, *Die Yäšt's des Awesta* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1927), p. 103, Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran*, op cit., pp. 114–15, Kaj Barr *Avesta* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1954), pp. 195–96, Helmut Humbach, "Rituelle termini technici in den awestischen Gathas," *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 8 (1956): 76, Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien*, op cit., p. 139, Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1, op cit., p. 238, Schmidt, "Is Vedic *Dhénā* related to Avestan *Daēnā*?," op cit., Colpe, "*Daēnā*, Lichtjungfrau, Zweite Gestalt," op cit., p. 65, Lankarany *Daēnā im Awesta*, op cit., pp. 15–17 (with a list of its early adherents), Piras "Le concezioni dell' anima." op cit., p. 45, Kellens "La fonction aurorale de Mithra et la Daēnā," op cit., p. 71, Gignoux *Man and Cosmos in Ancient Iran*, op cit., p. 12. On the verbal root, see Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., cols. 724–25 and Johnny Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), pp. 48–50.

40 Schmidt "Is Vedic *Dhénā* related to Avestan *Daēnā*?," op cit., Gignoux *Man and Cosmos in Ancient Iran*, op cit., pp. 12–15.

41 Prods Oktor Skjærvø, *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 264, idem, "Afterlife in Zoroastrianism," in Predrag Bukovec and Barbara Kolkmann-Klamt, eds., *Jenseitsvorstellungen im Orient* (Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 2013), p. 317.

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"conception,"[42] "conviction,"[43] conscience,"[44] "that which is seen or recognized (as the truth),"[45] "humanity's contemplation of and attitude toward life's fundamental conditions,"[46] or "seeing with the inner eye of one's mind and, especially, what is produced by such an activity, that is to say 'thought,' 'conviction,' 'belief,' or 'vision.'"[47]

The most sustained attempt to avoid this more or less unconscious projection of Protestant assumptions onto Zoroastrian "religion" has been made by Jean Kellens, the foremost contemporary translator of the Avesta, who has consistently stressed the sacrificial context and ritual concerns of that text. Having noticed that crucial aspects of the sacrifice (for which the most important sections of the Avesta provide the liturgy) are timed to take place at dawn, also that the *daēnā*-maiden appears at dawn and is described with auroral imagery, Kellens has developed a complex interpretation, whereby *daēnā* is "the vision of the beyond obtained in the course of sacrifice,"[48] as well as the "itinerant soul" that is reunited with the "soul" after death and guides the latter to the otherworld, knowledge of which and access to which was gained through the faithful performance of sacrifice.[49]

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42 Stanley Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1975), passim.

43 Johanna Narten, *Der Yasna Haptaŋhāiti* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1986), passim: *Gesinnung.*

44 Kellens and Pirart *Les textes vieil-avestiques*, op cit., Vol. 2, p. 252.

45 Boyce *History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1, op cit., p. 238.

46 Barr, *Avesta,* op cit., p. 195: "*Menneskets Betragtning af og Holdning over for Tilværelsens fundamentale Vilkaar.*"

47 Almut Hintze, "A Zoroastrian Vision," in Alan Williams, Sarah Stewart, and Almut Hintze, eds., *The Zoroastrian Flame: Exploring Religion, History and Tradition* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), p. 77.

48 The phrase is actually that of Cantera, "Yima, son *vara-* et la *daēnā* mazdéenne," op cit., p. 47, summarizing Kellens' conclusions: "*la vision de l'au-delà obtenue à travers le sacrifice.*" Kellens' own explications of the idea are addressed to specialists and, as such, are much more technical and elaborate. See, for instance, Jean Kellens, "Le jour se lève à la fin de la Gāthā Ahunauuaitī," *Journal asiatique* 301 (2013): 78, where he distinguishes three interrelated forms of the dawn: 1) the material dawn, visible at sunrise, which is referred to as *ušah* in Avestan (a term cognate to Greek *eos* and Latin *aurora*); 2) the immaterial dawn, raised to the level of a divine entity under the name *daēnā*; 3) the interiorization of this immaterial dawn as the visionary experience of sacrificers. See also Jean Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes.* Vol 3: *Le long préambule du sacrifice* (Paris: Collège de France, 2010), p. 153, where he stresses the eschatological nature of the *daēnā* vision that reveals the path one will follow after death.

49 This interpretation emerged gradually in Kellens, "La fonction aurorale de Mithra et la Daēnā," op cit., "L'âme entre le cadavre et le paradis," *Journal asiatique* 283 (1995): 49–54, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes*. Vol 3, op cit., pp. 149–55, "Le jour se lève," op cit., and "Observations sur l'intercalation du Hādōxt Nask dans le Yasna," in Dieter Gunkel, et al., eds., *Sahasram Ati Srajas. Indo-Iranian and Indo-European Studies in Honor of Stephanie W. Jamison* (Ann Arbor, MI: Beech Stave Press, 2016), pp. 153–58.

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Although I find Kellens' arguments innovative, ingenious, and attractive in many ways, they fail to persuade me for two reasons. First, all action – indeed, all thoughts, words, and deeds – are encompassed within *daēnā*, not just that related to sacrificial ritual. Second, *daēnā* denotes an entity that can be bad, as well as good. To take but one example, consider Yasna 31.20.

> Whoever attacks a truthful person, his ultimate lot is lamentations,
> A long life of darkness, bad food, the word "Alas" –
> Religion (*daēnā*) leads you to that, liars, by your own deeds.[50]

Where is the sacrificially-induced vision in this verse? Are we to imagine that the "liars" in question performed a bad sacrifice, in the course of which they obtained a bad vision, which inspired them to attack truthful others, thereby leading them to the bleak torments of hell? Much simpler to understand this passage as describing an act (attacking the truthful) that is associated with a bad religion (*daēnā*) and has eschatological consequences, but no particular connection to sacrificial rites or visionary experience.[51]

7

As part of his argument, Kellens took Avestan ²*dāy-* to describe the act of shining, as well as seeing, consistent with ancient theories that make the eyes emitters and not receivers of light.[52] This helped him avoid the danger of importing Protestant models that treat this "religion" as a "concept," "conviction," or "world-view." One can also accomplish that in another fashion, however, by deriving *daēnā* from Avestan ¹*dāy-* (< Indo-European **dheH*$_1$*-i-*), a verbal root that Bartholomae translated "to nourish and protect, to care for."[53] Supporters of this etymology are in a minority, arguing that its semantic advantage – which permits a view of "religion" as a nourishing and care of the person –

50 *yə̄ āiiaṯ ašauuanəm, diuuamnəm hōi aparəm xšiiō*
darəgə̄m āiiū təmaŋhō, dušxᵛarəϑəm auuaētās vacō
tə̄m vå ahūm drəguuaṇtō, šiiaoϑanāiš xᵛāiš daēnā naēšaṯ.

51 Other verses showing a negative *daēnā* include *Yasna* 45.2, 46.11, 48.4, 49.4, 51.13; *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.62, 18.8–9, and those passages where the term *duž.daēnā* ("s/he whose religion is bad") appears: *Yasna* 49.11, 65.7; *Yašt* 5.109, 9.31, 17.51, 19.47, 19.49, 19.87.

52 Kellens, "La fonction aurorale de Mithra et la Daēnā," op cit., p. 171.

53 Bartholomae *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., col. 724: "(das Rind, Akk.) hegen und pflegen, dafür sorgen, sich seiner sorgend annehmen bei." On ¹*dāy-* "to suck, suckle, nourish," see ibid., col. 724, Cheung *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, op cit., p. 47.

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offset the technical factors (particularly a detail of metrics, whose importance is disputed) that favor the other option.[54]

As Bartholomae observed, however, Avestan [1]*dāy-* never denotes nourishment in general; rather, it is used only with reference to cattle.[55] This, plus its relation to such Indo-Iranian cognates as Avestan *daēnu*, Vedic *dhenú* and *dhénā* (all = "cow"), Vedic *dhayati*, Ossetic *dæjyn, dæjun*, and Yaghnobi *diy-* (all = "to suck, suckle, take milk from a mother's breast"), Pahlavi *dāyag* and Farsi *dāyah* (both = "wet-nurse"), Kurdish *dā*(*yk*), Gurani *dā*(*ya*), and Taleshi *dāya* (all = "mother"), has led subsequent philologists to posit a more specific and basic connection to lactation and the consumption of milk.[56] What on earth can that mean?

The answer becomes clear when one considers Zoroastrian myths of alimentation that describe how the first human, Gayōmard, was created perfect by the Wise Lord, such that he needed no nourishment of any form.[57] Only after the Evil Spirit assaulted creation, introducing death, falsehood, appetite, and other evils, did Gayōmard's offspring – Mašya and Mašyānī – experience

54 The chief advocates are Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, op cit., p. 85, idem "La rencontre avec la *Daēnā*," op cit., pp. 65–72, Skalmowski "Some Remarks on Avestan *Daēnā*," op cit., and Pirart, *Corps et âmes du Mazdéen*, op cit., pp. 129–48. Wilhelm Eilers, "Einige altiranische Etymologien," *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 45 (1985): 27–28 states no explicit opinion, but seems supportive of the idea, while Oguibenine "Védique *dhénā*, avestique *daēnā*," op cit., sought intermediate ground, imagining that both verbal roots were somehow active in the way Avestan *daēnā* and Vedic *dhénā* were used and understood. Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes*, Vol. 3, op cit., pp. 151–55 was open to such a position, but three years later announced that he "abjured these hesitations" (Kellens, "Le jour se lève," op cit., p. 77, note 24). The metric issue follows on recognition that *daēnā* was pronouced as trisyllabic (thus **dayanā*), which some experts believe favors, even precludes derivation from [1]*dāy-*, while others find this conclusion exaggerated. On this question, cf. the opinions of Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes*, Vol. 3, p. 154 and Pirart *Corps et âmes du Mazdéen*, pp. 129–30.

55 Bartholomae *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, col. 724.

56 For this analysis, see Widengren "La rencontre avec la *Daēnā*," op cit., pp. 70–72; for further comparanda, see Hermann Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1873), cols. 675–76 and 695–96, Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjačeslav V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, trans. Johanna Nichols (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995; Russian original, 1984), p. 487, Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*. Vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1992), p. 775, and Cheung *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, op cit., p. 47.

57 *Greater Bundahišn* 7.10 describes how the Evil Spirit first afflicted Gayōmard with hunger. Only after this did the Wise Lord provide him with food; cf. *Dēnkard* 3.23, 3.80, 3.209, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 64.3–5. The best scholarly discussion of Gayōmard remains Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des iraniens. I^e partie: Gayōmard, Masjaγ et Masjānaγ, Hōšang et Taχmōruw* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt, 1918), pp. 7–105.

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the need to eat and their first meal consisted of milk, which unlike all other foods (save honey) can be procured without injury to living creatures.[58] As humanity's first food, milk is also analogous to the first food of infants, which makes them grow and thrive, while staving off hunger, unhappiness, and imminent death (all theorized as demonic forces unleashed by the Evil Spirit), while doing no harm to others.[59]

Like infants, Mašya and Mašyānī gradually moved on to other foods, each of which involved them in greater violence and guilt.[60] The story does not end there, however, for the texts observe that toward the end of life, individuals eat less and less, withdrawing from meat first and then milk, subsisting on water until they die. Just so, at the end of cosmic history, righteous humanity will renounce meat first, then milk, and having overcome hunger in this fashion, they will have overcome death. Not only will they live forever, their acts will set in motion the resurrection of the dead, the final conquest of evil, the restoration of a perfect cosmos according to the Wise Lord's plan, the end of history and beginning of eternity.[61]

---

58 *Greater Bundahišn* 14.11–20. Zoroastrian cosmology treats plants, animals, and humans as original creations of the Wise Lord and theorizes them as pure, perfect, and not-to-be-injured-or-defiled by any moral subject. All aggressive action against them, which includes the cutting, tearing, uprooting, cooking, and eating of plants, originates with the Evil Spirit's primordial assault and partakes of the same Ahrimanian nature.

59 Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 15.11. Cf. *Vīdaēuudāt* 21.6–7, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 27.2, *Dēnkard* 3.374, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 16.1–12. Also relevant, perhaps, is a tradition reported by Pliny, *Natural History* 11.102: " They say that Zoroaster lived for thirty years in the desert on cheese prepared thus, so that he felt no effects of old age" (*tradunt zoroastren in desertis caseo vixisse annis xx ita temperato, ut vetustatem non sentiret*).

60 *Greater Bundahišn* 14.21–24.

61 *Greater Bundahišn* 34.1–3. The passage is worth citing in its entirety.

> It says in the religion: "Just as when Mašya and Mašyānī emerged from the earth, they first consumed water, then plants, then milk, and then meat, so too people when they are dying first cease to eat meat, then milk, then bread and consume only water until they die." So too in the last millennium, the power of appetite decreases so that with one meal every three days and nights, a person continues to be satisfied. Then people cease from meat-consumption, consuming plants and the milk of beneficent animals. Then they cease from milk-consumption also and then they cease from plant-consumption and become exclusively water-consuming. For the ten years before Sōšyans [the eschatological hero and savior] comes they continue in non-consumption and they do not die. Then Sōšyans causes the dead to rise up.
>
> *gōwēd pad dēn kū az ān čiyōn Mašē ud Mašānē ka az zamīg abar rust hēnd nazdist āb ud pas urwar pas šīr ud pas gōšt xward hēnd mardōm-iz ka-šān murdan nazdist <az> gōšt ud šīr ud pas az nān xwardan-iz be estēnd ud ēwāz tā be murdan āb xwarēnd. ēdōn-iz pad hazārag ī Ušēdarmāh nērōg ī āz ēdōn be kāhēd kū mardōm pad ēk pih-xwarišnīh se šab ud rōz pad sagrīh estēnd. pas az ān az gōšt-xwarišnīh be estēnd ud urwar ud pēm ī gōspandān xwarēnd. pas az ān pēm-xwarišnīh-iz abāz estēnd ud pas*

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Milk is thus theorized as the best sustenance available during the time when good and evil struggle. Insofar as the human body is a prime battleground in that struggle, it is constantly in danger of hunger, starvation, and death, while also facing risk from the impurities ("poisons") that all foods contain in varying concentrations, but milk least of all.[62] Although milk thus helps each individual survive, thereby securing the continuity of life, this is true only during the period of conflict and milk will no longer be needed once evil is overcome. In these ways, religion (*daēnā*) and milk can be seen as complementary counterparts of each other, providing the best spiritual and material sustenance, respectively, for people in the era of death, mixture, and other ills, but entities whose importance is expected to disappear with the coming age of peace and perfection.

Which is to say, that although this religion understood and represented itself as the highest good and the best response to the problem of mortality, it also considered itself infantile in ways and theorized its own obsolescence. Such positions are as unusual in the history of religions as they are in the history of theory, but we might do well to recall their implicit modesty when we ourselves turn to theorizing.

---

az urwar-xwarišnīh-iz estēnd ud āb-xwarišn bawēnd. pēš pad dah sāl ka Sōšyans āyēd ō axwarišnīh estēnd ud nē mīrēnd. pas Sōšyans rist ul hangēzēnēd .

Cf. *Zād Spram* 34.34–43. Note also that the souls of the righteous who die before the Evil Spirit has been defeated receive milk or its purest form ("spring butter") upon their reception in heaven, food that will sustain them until the final Renovation (*frašgird*), when nutrition will no longer be necessary. Thus, *Hādōxt Nask* 2.18, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.151–56, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 30.12–13, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestan ī Dēnīg* 23.17

62 Regarding the nature of these poisons and the unique value attributed to milk, see further Chapters Three and Sixteen of the present volume.

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PART 2

Old Persian and Achaemenid

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CHAPTER 6

Apocalyptic Temporality and Politics in the Ancient World

1 Of Truth and the Lie

For heuristic purposes, I find it useful to begin with a set of texts that are not normally considered apocalypses, although they share many characteristics of the genre.[1] These are the royal inscriptions of the Achaemenian king Darius the Great at Bisitun and Susa. Bisitun, which means "The Place of the Gods" (Old Persian **Bagā-stāna*), is a mountain that rises abruptly over the main east-west thoroughfare of Iranian antiquity. There, some sixty meters above a dramatic point where the route winds between sheer rock and a spring of fresh water, Darius placed an elaborate relief, accompanied by a lengthy trilingual inscription (Elamite, Akkadian, and Old Persian, the first written attestation of the last language).[2] Work on this monument was begun in 520 BCE, and its purpose was to commemorate events of 522–521, which included Darius's accession to power and a series of rebellions throughout the empire, all of which he managed to quell, thereby securing his kingship.

The relief depicts fourteen figures: twelve human, one royal, and one divine (Figure 6.1).

Reading from left to right, one first encounters a group of three figures, all of whom face right. The first one bears a spear, the second a bow, and together

1 This chapter was originally published in John J. Collins, Bernard McGinn, and Stephen J. Stein, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 3 vols., (New York: Continuum Press, 1998), Vol. 1, pp. 457–75 and used by permission of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

2 The standard critical edition of the text is Rüdiger Schmitt, *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian Text* (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part I, Volume I) (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1991). The inscription's linguistic situation reflects complexities of the Achaemenid court. The original composition would have been in Old Persian, presumably dictated by Darius to his scribes, who produced a written version in Elamite (the chief administrative language at the time), followed by one in Akkadian. Finally, a cuneiform script was invented as a means to represent Old Persian, and the text was retranslated into its original language and read back to Darius, who approved the final version. This can be deduced from the content of DB §70, the placement of the three versions on the rock face, and palaeographic details. The Elamite was engraved in 520 BCE, while the Akkadian and Old Persian were probably added in 519, toward the end of which year Column 5 was added.

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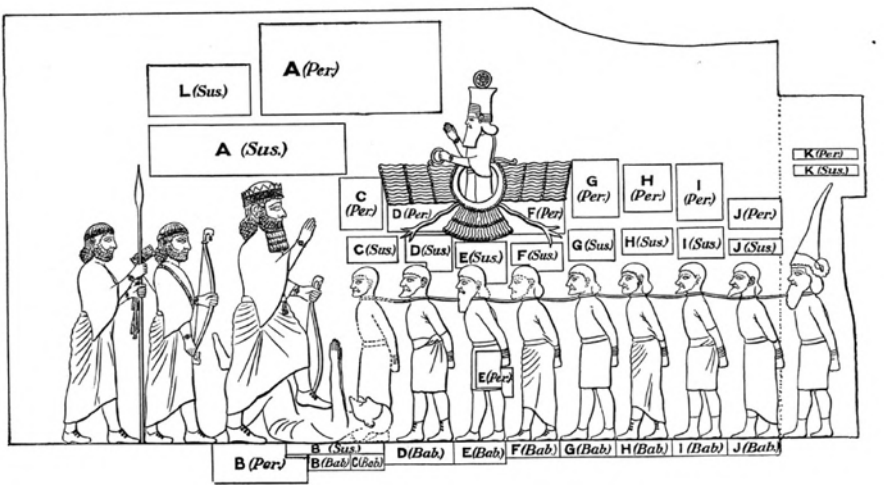

FIGURE 6.1 Line drawing based on the Bisitun relief

they represent the might of the Persian army; the third is a full head larger than the others, and this is Darius himself. In his left hand, he too holds a bow and he raises his right in a polysemic gesture that is simultaneously a greeting, an assertion of rectitude and power, and a sign of control. Floating above the rest of the composition in a winged circle is the chief deity of the pantheon, the Wise Lord (*Auramazdā*; cf. Avestan *Ahura Mazdā* Pahlavi *Ohrmazd*), who faces Darius and raises his right hand, mirroring the gesture made by the king. Beneath this god, the composition is completed by ten figures, much smaller and sadder than the Persians. The first of their number lies on his back, his arms raised in supplication, as Darius plants a foot squarely on his chest. Behind him are nine more figures. As a group, they face Darius, their collective identity and fate established by a rope that binds them together at the neck. Their hands are also bound behind them. For all that they share the status of the vanquished, their portraits are individualized to convey ethnic stereotypes. Beneath each one is a formulaic caption:

> This Açina lied. He said thus: "I am King in Elam." (DBc)
> This Nidintu-Bel lied. He said thus: "I am Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabonidus. I am king in Babylon." (DBd)
> This Fravarti lied. He said thus: "I am Xšaθrita, of the family of Cyaxares. I am King in Media." (DBf)

And so on, seven more times. Together, the picture and captions identify these unfortunate men as pretenders in all senses of the term: people who

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represented – and perhaps rightly understood – themselves as heirs to a throne, but whom their conqueror perceived and constituted as nothing more than frauds and deceivers.

The phrase "frauds and deceivers" signals a central concern of Old Persian ideology, but it fails to convey the way issues of truth and falsehood are treated within a discourse that is simultaneously ethical, theological, and cosmological. Thus, Old Persian *arta-* denotes not just "truth," but the principle of right, order, and coherence on which the universe depends. Speech acts that are true in this broad sense create and maintain proper human relations; they were also understood to have real creative power beyond the social sphere. As a result, true speech – in particular, that of deities, priests, and kings – calls an orderly cosmos into being, advancing the Wise Lord's goals for his creation.[3] Truth is demanded of all righteous persons, and those who fulfill this obligation enjoy a blessed state after death, in which condition they are designated *artāvan-*, the righteous ones or, more literally, "possessors of truth."[4]

Similar ideas are attested in other branches of the Indo-Iranian family, suggesting that this ideology has a deep prehistory. Thus, the cognate term in Avestan (*aša*) denotes not only an abstract principle, but is also the name of an important deity: "Truth" personified, who is the foremost assistant of the Wise Lord. In Vedic Sanskrit, the cognate (ṛta) designates not just truth, but the subtle cosmic order on which all depends.

Conversely, "the Lie" (Old Persian *drauga*; verbal forms are built on the root *druj-*; cf. Avestan *drug*, Vedic *druḥ*, German *Trug*, English *be-tray*) is that which is most antithetical to truth, order, and the well-being of creation. The Lie encompasses all that corrupts, perverts, beguiles, and deludes; all that leads people into evil and renders them destructive to themselves, others, and the world around them. Just as Truth is the chief instrument of the Wise Lord, so the Lie does similar service for his primordial adversary, the Evil Spirit (Avestan *Aŋra Mainyu*, Pahlavi *Ahriman*). Ancient Iranian religion is built on the dualistic premise that these forces contend throughout history, but that history has

3 The high importance Persians accorded to the truth was noted by Greek authors, including Herodotus 1.136 and 138, Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.8.2.

4 Although its Avestan cognate (*ašāvan*) is common, there are only two occurrences of *artāvan* in the Old Persian corpus, both in the same paragraph.

> You who come hereafter, if you should think "May I be happy when living and may I be righteous (*artavan*) when dead," conduct yourself according to that law which the Wise Lord established. You should worship the Wise Lord, along with Truth (*arta*). The prayerful man who conducts himself according to the law that the Wise Lord established and who worships the Wise Lord, along with Truth, that prayerful one becomes happy when living and righteous (*artavan*) when dead. (XPh §4d)

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a finite duration, which spans the time from the moment creation assumed material (instead of purely spiritual) form until the world's end, a period that Pahlavi sources tabulate in a series of nine or twelve millennia. During this period, it is the responsibility of humans to choose rightly between the two rival forces, knowing that history is moving toward its cataclysmic finale, at which time the Wise Lord, Truth, and their adherents will triumph decisively over Ahriman and the Lie, establishing a renewed, purified, and perfected creation for all eternity.

2 Kings, Rebels and Imposters

Each paragraph of the inscription at Bisitun begins with a formula that announces its narrator and underscores the authority of his voice: "Proclaims Darius the King" (*θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya*). The first nine paragraphs form a prologue, in which Darius announces his titles (DB §1), his genealogy (DB §2), his family's claim to the throne (DB §3–5), the provinces in his empire (DB §6) and the extent of his power over them (DB §7–8). Most significant is his claim of legitimacy, which could not be based simply on lineage and descent, since neither his father nor grandfather ruled the empire (also, most anomalously, both men were still living when Darius took power).[5] Neither did it derive from proper coronation ritual, there being no indication that such was held. Rather, it rests squarely on divine election and God's continuing favor.

> Proclaims Darius the King: The Wise Lord bestowed this kingdom on me. The Wise Lord bore me aid until I consolidated this kingdom. By the Wise Lord's will I hold[6] this kingdom.
>
> DB §9

With this as preamble, the Great King commenced his narrative at DB §10. The story is complex and critical responses to it have been varied. Some take it more or less at face value, while others regard it as royal propaganda that covers up some fairly dirty dealings. It begins with Cambyses, son and heir of Cyrus the Great, who ruled the Persian Empire from 529–522 BCE. According to the Bisitun inscription and the relevant Greek sources (which draw on Darius's

5 This is established in DSf §3b.

6 Both this and the preceding verb (*dar-* and *ham-dar-*) suggest the possession of something one holds fast (cf. the cognate Lt. *fir-mus*). Moreover, they involve word play on Darius' name, which literally means "He who holds fast the good" (from participial **dhārayat-vasu-*).

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version, but also preserve some independent information), Cambyses secretly murdered his brother Bardiya before departing for the conquest of Egypt.[7] Then, while Cambyses was on that campaign, there was unrest and rebellion in the home provinces. Darius describes the situation in terms that lead one to understand the crisis as not just political, but moral, religious, and ultimately cosmic: "The people became disloyal (or: evil)[8] and the Lie (*drauga*) became great throughout the land" (DB §10).

At this juncture, the text introduces the character depicted supine in the relief, who incarnates all that is evil and whose treacherous actions initiate a long string of woes. This is "Gaumāta the Magus," a man whose title marks him as a Median priest, but whose conduct mocks and perverts the requirements of priestly office. Of him, we are told: "He lied (*adurujiya*) to the people, saying 'I am Bardiya, the son of Cyrus, the brother of Cambyses.' Then the people all became rebellious from Cambyses" (DB §11). After three months of successful impersonation, this audacious deceiver claimed the throne for himself and became undisputed king when Cambyses died under mysterious circumstances (DB §11).[9]

Drawing on traditional Iranian myths, Darius describes Gaumāta first as a demonic figure who threatens the order of the cosmos and then as the victim whose sacrifice restores it.[10] He brands him a thief and usurper (DB §12), then describes how, once enthroned, this false-priest-cum-false-king instituted a reign of terror, killing anyone who threatened to unmask him (DB §13). Silence fell over the land until there arose a savior: a descendant of the Achaemenian

7 The most important of the Greek sources is Herodotus 3.61–79. Others include Aeschylus, *Persians* 770 ff., Ctesias, Trogus, apud Justinus, and several of much lesser value.

8 There is some disagreement over the precise form and significance of this word. Schmitt, op cit., p. 50 reads *ari – kā* and compares Vedic *áli – kā* "unfaithful, disloyal. " In contrast, Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953), p. 170 reads *arikā* (with a short *-i-*) and derives it from **asrā*, cognate to Avestan *aŋrā*, "evil," the defining quality of the "Evil Spirit" (*Aŋra Mainyu*) in Zoroastrianism.

9 The text somewhat cryptically states that Cambyses "died his own death" (*Kambujiya uvamṛšiyuš amariyata*, DB §11). Some have taken this to mean suicide and others, a natural death. Herodotus treats it as a freak accident guided by inexorable fate (3.64).

10 Although space does not permit me to develop this argument in detail, Darius draws on two bodies of myth. The first is the cosmogonic account of the Evil Spirit's first assault on the world and the ironic way his murder of the first man and first bovine (Gayōmard and Evagdād) redound to the good of creation. The second treats the origins of the social and political order, focusing on the first king (Yima), who lost his realm to a monstrous usurper (Aži Dahāka), and the hero (Thraētaona) who defeated the latter and restored proper kingship.

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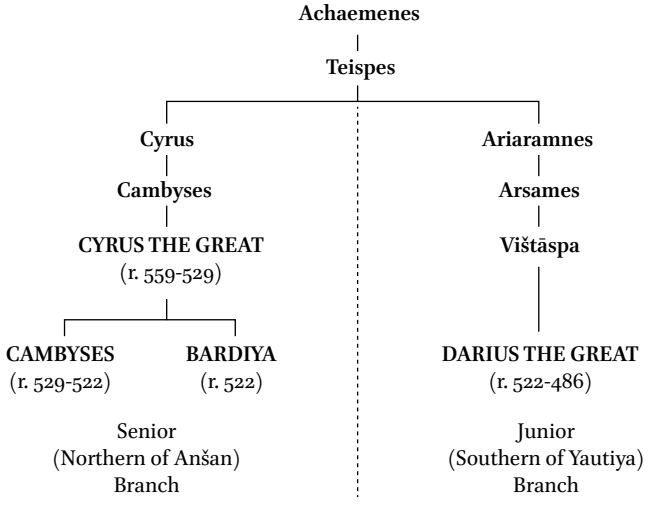
line (but not of Cyrus, a fact the text acknowledges but elides).[11] More importantly, this hero was chosen and supported by God himself.

> No one dared to say anything about Gaumāta the Magus until I arose. Then I asked the Wise Lord for assistance. The Wise Lord bore me aid. Ten days of the month Bagayadi had passed (29 September 522) when I, with a few men, slew that Gaumāta the Magus and the people who were his foremost followers.... By the Wise Lord's will I became king. The Wise Lord bestowed the kingship on me.
>
> Proclaims Darius the King: The kingship that had been usurped from our lineage, I put that in its place. I restored it in place. Just as they had been before, so I made the temples that Gaumāta the Magus destroyed. I restored the pastures and livestock and servants and houses of the people, of which Gaumāta the Magus had deprived them. I set the people back in place, in Persia and Media and the other lands. Just as it was before, so I brought back that which had been usurped. By the Wise Lord's will I did this. I strove until I restored our (royal) house to its place, just as before. Thus I strove, by the Wise Lord's will, so that Gaumāta the Magus did not usurp our (royal) house.
>
> DB §§13–14

11 The Bisitun inscription represents the Achaemenian genealogy as follows. Those who ruled over the empire, rather than a single province, appear in capital letters (after Kent, op cit., p. 158). The dynasty was founded by Cyrus the Great, who was initially succeeded by his own descendants. Darius's accession disrupted this dynastic line, and one can view his invocation of Achaemenes (DB §2–3) – the (mythic?) ancestor he shared with Cyrus – as a strategic intervention and perhaps a convenient fiction.



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With this account of restoration – social, political, and religious, all accomplished by divine favor – the drama of Gaumāta is brought to a close. Quickly, Darius moves on to speak of the nine rebellions that broke out in Elam, Babylon, and other provinces of the empire over the following months (DB §15–53). In each case, he fleshes out the brief descriptions of the captions on the relief. A given individual represented himself as the heir to a royal line that had seemingly ended when the nation in question was conquered and incorporated as a province of the Persian Empire. Although the text treats all such claims as false – that is, inspired by the Lie and disruptive to proper order – it acknowledges that people rallied to the standards of these pretenders and that each of them raised armies for their cause of nationalist revolt. Although embattled and occasionally outnumbered, Darius invariably called on the Wise Lord, from whom he received assistance. In his first year as king, he and his generals fought nineteen battles, winning victory in all. The text constitutes these victories as incontestable proof that he was and remains God's chosen.

In each of these cases, the rebellion ended with the capture of the pretender, who was punished in exemplary fashion. Most striking is the fate of Fravarti and Tritantaxma, the two rebels who claimed descent from Cyaxares and who sought to restore the Median empire, which, from the Persian point of view, would amount to reversing the course of world history. Both these men were bound and taken before Darius, who had their nose, ears, and tongue cut off and an eye put out, after which he placed them on public display and finally had them impaled (DB §§32–33). Clearly, such acts were meant to provide an object lesson for other would-be rebels and they may also be understood as a theater of cruelty, in which the king's power was graphically demonstrated. Beyond this, they echoed Indo-Iranian myths in which creation involved the sacrificial dismemberment of a primordial victim. Above all, they were meant to be read as conclusive judgments, through which Truth was reestablished and the Lie suppressed.

> Proclaims Darius the King: These are the nine kings whom I seized in these battles.
>
> Proclaims Darius the King: These are the lands that became rebellious. The Lie made them rebellious. These men lied to the people. Then the Wise Lord put them into my hand. As was my desire, so I did unto them.[12]

12 This formula occurs elsewhere (DB §§72 and 75), also with reference to the punishment of rebels. The diction of the Old Persian texts as a whole makes it clear, however, they do not wish the king's desire (*kāma*) to be understood as volatile, frivolous, self-indulgent, sadistic, or erotic, for all that a critical reader might perceive such aspects. In most contexts, the king's desire is simply to establish that which is just and good (DNa §4, DNb §8āe). Moreover, desire is attributed to two subjects only, the king and the Wise Lord, the desire

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> Proclaims Darius the King: You who may be king hereafter – Protect yourself boldly from the Lie! The man who is a follower of the Lie, punish him with a good punishment if you would think "Let my land be secure."
>
> DB §53–55, cf. §62–64

Fittingly, Darius then swears that all he has said is true (DB §56–57), and suggests he has deliberately understated his accomplishments in order that his readers not be tempted to the mistake of incredulity (DB §58–59). He calls down blessings on anyone who reads his story and repeats it to others, with corresponding curses on anyone who would conceal or destroy it (DB §60–61, 65–67). He ends by naming the six noble Persians who helped him to kill Gaumāta and asks that their offspring enjoy benefits forever (DB §68–69). The final paragraph of the original inscription states that the king himself supervised preparation of this text and had his scribes prepare parchment copies for dissemination throughout the empire (DB §70). A later addition describes events in the second year of Darius's reign (521–520 BCE), which included the suppression of Elamite rebels (DB §71–73) and an expedition against the Scythians (DB §74–75), both of whom are denounced on religious grounds.[13] The text ends with a benediction that underscores its religious nature, that of its author, and that of the regime that produced it: "Proclaims Darius the King: He who worships the Wise Lord, may there be favor for him, both while living and when dead." (DB §76)

3 New Heaven, New Earth

The moral universe described on the rock face at Bisitun is one that initially is in disarray. So prevalent is the Lie that people repeatedly misrepresent themselves as kings, while countless others, unable to discriminate between truth and falsehood, choose to follow the imposters. Kingship, however, is not theorized as an elective office, in which ratification by the populace plays a role of any consequence. Rather, it is represented as a charisma in the most literal sense, such that true kings enjoy God's favor and triumph over all rivals by the

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of the one being a reflection and extension of the other's. As Darius states in DSf §3c: "This was the desire of the Wise Lord: In all the earth, he chose me as [his] man. He made me king of all the empire."

13 Proclaims Darius the King: "These [people] were evil. The Wise Lord was not worshipped by them" (DB §§72 and 75). This seems to be a new line of propaganda developed when Column 5 was added to the Bisitun text (519 BCE), since the charge of non-belief is not made in the first four columns.

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force of that truth. The central proposition of the text, which it never tires of repeating, is that Darius alone acted – and inevitably prevailed – "by the Wise Lord's will" (*vašnā Auramazdāha*).[14]

DB thus traces a crisis it takes to be simultaneously dynastic and cosmic, narrating the eruption of evil in the form of a foreign priest, inspired by the Lie, who usurped and perverted the world's foremost empire. The text goes on to describe the heroic intervention of a savior prince, God's chosen, who perceived the Lie, conquered the villain, saw the world and empire through a period of unprecedented woes, then meted out judgment, restored righteous order, and ushered in a new age of perfection. The establishment of that paradisal condition is treated in a second set of texts, which date to a later phase of Darius's reign, c. 518–512 BCE, when he built his great palace at Susa, where these inscriptions are found.[15]

The nineteen inscriptions that have been recovered at Susa were written in mono- and trilingual versions on clay and marble tablets, as well as on statues, columns, bricks and marble plaques from the palace complex. Many texts exist in multiple copies, including the most extensive one (DSf), which was placed, inter alia, on the glazed tiles that formed the frieze of the great hall. All these texts follow a consistent pattern, although individual elements may be lacking in any given variant. Those elements are, in the constant order of their presentation: 1) An account of the cosmogony; 2) A list of the king's titles; 3) A list of the provinces in his empire; 4) A legitimating account of his divine election; 5) An assertion that his deeds were accomplished by the Wise Lord's will; 6) Description and praise of his palace at Susa; 7) A benediction. Although no variant realizes this pattern in its totality, DSf comes closest, lacking only one element.

Within this structure, subtle resonances and parallelisms between the first and sixth sections advance an audacious subtext, insinuating that God's purpose in history has now been fulfilled with the erection of Darius's palace.

14 On this ideologically significant phrase, see Bruce Lincoln, "The Wise Lord's Will and the Making of Wonders: At the Intersection of Religious and Imperial Ideology," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 101 (1996): 147–167, reprinted as chapter 21 of *"Happiness for Mankind,"* op cit.

15 Most of the texts are available in Kent, *Old Persian*, op cit., 141–146, with the exception of DSz, which is found in M.-J. Steve, "Inscriptions des Achéménides à Suse," *Studia Iranica* 3 (1974): 164. On the excavations at Susa and the importance of the palace complex, see Pierre Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1996), pp. 177–180, Muhammad A. Dandamaev and Vladimir G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 256–259, and Rémy Boucharlat, "Suse et la Susiane a l'époque achéménide: Données archéologiques," *Achaemenid History* 4 (1990): 149–175.

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Toward this end, creation is described in two fashions. In several of the longer inscriptions, the Wise Lord is credited with five specific accomplishments. First comes creation of the earth, then sky, humanity, and human happiness, all of which deeds are described with the verb *dā-*, "to put in place, create." God's last accomplishment, however, is set somewhat apart from the others, while it is also represented as his culminating act. For this, the text uses a different verb: *kar-*, "to make, build, do."

> A great god is the Wise Lord, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created mankind, who created the happiness of mankind, who made Darius king: one king over many, one architect[16] over many.
>
> DSe §1 = DSf §1 = DSt §1 = DNa §1[17]

A second version occurs in a shorter inscription that is limited to a creation account and a benediction.

> A great god is the Wise Lord, who makes a wonder (*fraša*) on this earth, who makes mankind on this earth, who makes the happiness of mankind, who makes good horses and good chariots. On me he bestowed them. May the Wise Lord protect me and what has been built by me.
>
> DSs; cf. DSp and DNb §1

Several points in this brief text merit attention. First, God's creation of heaven and earth is here summarized in a single term, the significance of which we will shortly consider: *fraša*, "a wonder." Second, his creative acts are here all denoted with the verb *kar-*. Third, the same verb occurs in the final benediction, where Darius asks the Wise Lord to protect what he, as king, has made

16 The royal title *framātar* is derived from the verb *frā-mā-* "to measure out, plan." This verb occurs four times in the Old Persian corpus, all with specific reference to Darius's construction of palaces at Susa and Persepolis (DSf §§3d and 4, DSz l. 36, XPg). Note the way two of these texts conjoin the verbs *frā-mā-* and *kar-* with specific reference to acts of building.

Proclaims Darius the King: By the Wise Lord's will, a great wonder was planned (*framātam*) at Susa. A great wonder was built (*kartam*). May the Wise Lord protect me and my land. (DSz ll. 35–37).

Says Xerxes the Great King: By the Wise Lord's will, Darius the King, who was my father, built and planned (*akunauš utā frāmāyata*) much that was good. By the Wise Lord's further will, I added to that which he built, and I built further. May the Wise Lord, together with the gods, protect me and my realm. (XPg)

17 On this and related texts, see Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les créations d'Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58.

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and built (*kartam*, the past passive participle of *kar-*). This verbal echo suggests that like God himself, Darius is a creator; further, that after creating the universe, the Wise Lord consigned it to Darius's care, so that his royal deeds could complete the creation.

The parallelism between divine and royal creativity is further underscored by Darius' use of the term already noted: *fraša*, "a wonder." Within the Old Persian corpus, only two actors are ever said to have created (*dā-*), planned (*frā-mā-*), or built (*kar-*) such a wonder and only two items are so designated. In the first instance, as we have seen, the Wise Lord's creation of heaven and earth can be called the making of a *fraša* (DSs, DNb §1). In the second, Darius repeatedly refers to his palace at Susa with the same term.

> Says Darius the King: By the Wise Lord's will, may this palace built (*kartam*) by me appear a wonder (*fraša*) to whomever may see it.
>
> DSj §3; cf. DSa§2, DSd §2, DSf §4, DSj §3, DSo, DSz ll. 35–37

From all indications, Susa truly was a marvel, and was so regarded throughout antiquity. In one inscription, Darius details the way each province of his empire contributed its most distinctive precious substances: gold from Bactria, cedars from Lebanon, turquoise from Chorasmia, ivory from India and Ethiopia (DSf §§3f–3k). The point was not just conspicuous consumption. Rather, the palace was meant to be a microcosm of the empire, the central point at which all regions of the globe were reconciled and, what is more, the culminating accomplishment of world history, which the Great King built with the finest matter of the Wise Lord's creation. With the completion of Susa, Darius seems to have believed – or at the very least, wished his subjects to believe – that the Lie had been vanquished, Truth restored, the cosmos purified and perfected for the eternity that was just dawning. All this is summarized in his use of Old Persian *fraša*, a term that in Avestan and Pahlavi texts (i.e. the specifically religious literature of Zoroastrianism) specifically denotes the eschatological perfection of existence, including the coming of a savior, defeat of the Evil Spirit, resurrection of the dead, last judgment, and purification of the cosmos for eternity.[18]

18 On *fraša*, see Lincoln, "The Wise Lord's Will and the Making of Wonders," op cit. For broader discussions of Achaemenid royal propaganda, Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse*, op cit., pp. 175–265, Gregor Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im achämenidischen Iran* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), Margaret Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), and Gherardo Gnoli, "Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Achéménides," in *Commémoration Cyrus: Hommage Universe*l (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 117–90.

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4 Recalibrating the Temporal Schemata of Politically Significant Narratives

Darius's inscriptions closely resemble apocalyptic literature, not only in form, but in their core theological content. Both genres thematize dualistic struggles between the embattled forces of a good God and their quasi-demonic adversaries. In both cases, a battle for royal power and legitimacy is understood to be so profound that the fate of the cosmos hangs upon it. And in both, after a series of perilous travails God's chosen hero wins a definitive victory over evil, then undertakes works of reconstruction that found a new age of peace and perfection.

In light of all this, one might well ask: Why are Darius's inscriptions *not* considered an instance of the apocalyptic genre? The answer, I think, is fairly simple, but no less instructive for that. The discourse of the inscriptions is in the first person and the past tense, describing things the author has already accomplished. In contrast, the crucial passages of apocalyptic are normally in the third person and the future tense, a future so charged with urgency and intensity that it often borders on the imperative. These grammatical differences reflect different temporal orientations, subject positions, and political agendas.

For his part, Darius imposed a religious pattern on recent events, consistent with his imperial purposes. Accordingly, his account contrasts the turbulence, danger, and immorality of the immediate past to the regime of truth and righteousness he (claimed to have) established. Although opinion is not unanimous, most scholars now take this account *cum grano salis*, and read "Gaumāta the Magus" as a convenient fiction of Darius's invention. In their view, the man Darius killed was exactly whom he claimed to be: Bardiya, son of Cyrus, brother of Cambyses, and from March until September of 522, reigning king of the Persian empire. Rather than seeing the gaps and implausibilities of Darius's account as the reflection of events Byzantine in their complexity, they take them to have been the instruments through which a new but shrewd monarch attempted to discredit his predecessors and justify himself. Blaming Cambyses for the secret, previously unknown murder of Bardiya and redefining Bardiya as a secret, previously unknown imposter, Darius thus crafted a story line in which he played the role of hero and savior, rather than that of regicide and usurper.[19]

19 A convenient summary of the literature is provided by Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les historiens de l'empire Achéménide et l'inscription de Bisotun," *Annales Économies Sociétés Civilisations* 37 (1982): 813–823. The most important discussions are those of Briant *Histoire de l'empire perse*, op cit., pp. 109–118, M.A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the*

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Critical readers have also been prompted to ask what caused the rebellions of 522–521. Here, a piece of information omitted from the Bisitun text, but preserved elsewhere, holds some interest. Herodotus states that during Bardiya's brief reign, "he exhibited great deeds of benevolence (*euergesias megalas*) for all his subjects, so that when he died all the peoples in Asia yearned for him, except the Persians themselves. For the Magus began by sending messages to all the nations of the empire and he proclaimed them exempt from tribute and military service for three years" (Herodotus 3.67; cf. Justinus 1.9.12–13).[20]

Writing shortly, but securely, after the fact – when Bardiya was dead, the rebellions crushed, and tributes reimposed – Darius offered a very different picture, exercising the victor's control over the historic record to brand the rebels followers of the Lie. At Bisitun and Susa, we can observe him shifting from an emergency campaign of military pacification to a long-term project of ideological control. The texts his scribes produced for him at these sites were designed to persuade his subjects – and perhaps to persuade even Darius himself – that with his accession God's plan for history had been fulfilled, and that further change was as unthinkable as it would be undesirable.

All of this contrasts with the standard conventions of apocalyptic literature, although similar incidents figure therein: a time of woes, the coming of a savior, war against the beast, the triumph of good, judgments on the wicked, the creation of a new world order, which culminates in the erection of a glorious new city, palace, or temple. Apocalyptic texts, however, do not treat these as *faits accomplis*, but as certainties anticipated in the immediate future. Where imperial propaganda constructs an official, sacred history that speaks of the past in order to stabilize the present and foreclose the possibility of any different future, apocalypse constructs a prophetic utterance that speaks of the future in order to destabilize an offensive status quo.

Achaemenid Empire (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), pp. 83–135, Jack Martin Balcer, *Herodotus and Bisitun: Problems in Ancient Persian Historiography* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1987), E.J. Bickerman and H. Tadmor, "Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis, and the Magi," *Athenaeum* 56 (1978): 239–261, and M.A. Dandamaev, *Persien unter den ersten Achämeniden* (*6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*) (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1976). Those more inclined to accept Darius's story include Ilya Gershevitch, "The False Smerdis," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 27 (1979): 337–351 and Josef Wiesehofer, *Der Aufstand Gaumatas und die Anfänge Dareios I* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt 1978).

20 Herodotus gives Darius's predecessor and victim the name "Smerdis," which is one of several attempts to capture Old Persian *Bardiya* within Greek phonology. Others include *Mardos* (Aeschylus, *Persians* 773–775), *Merphis* (scholium to idem, line 770), and *Mergis* (Trogus, apud Justinus). Herodotus gives no indication of knowing the name *Gaumāta*. Rather, he tells that the Magus-imposter had the same name as the prince he impersonated, to whom, as a further coincidence, he bore an uncanny resemblance (Hdt. 3.61).

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The similarities and differences of the two genres are hardly accidental, and one can observe a complex dialogue and war of position between them. Thus, apocalypses take as their starting point one of the central tenets of imperial propaganda: the equation of an imperial order with the order of the cosmos itself. That granted, however, they strategically reshape another key element of imperial ideology to serve their own, antithetical purposes. For instead of concluding that the empire in question is, like the cosmos, eternal and unchangeable, they assert that the cosmos, like this empire, is fast approaching its violent end.

This is why apocalyptic texts take the form of a future tense discourse, portraying events that are imminent and inevitable, being parts of a pattern that God has inscribed on historic time and a malleable cosmos. It is their task, moreover, to disclose the true nature of this pattern by speaking of creation, heaven and hell, the course of world history, the succession of empires, and so forth, in order to explain the present degraded state of affairs and to announce the prospect of its violent end.[21] The violence of their eschatological vision thus indexes the severity of the problems they confront and reflects their conviction that these difficulties are irresolvable in any less radical fashion.

Along these lines, apocalypses regularly denounce a scandalous world, where wealth, power, royal office, and other advantages belong to foreigners, turncoats, and those judged immoral. Beyond this, they call for cataclysmic change: the humbling of the mighty and exaltation of the meek. This inversionary message reorients people whose situations might otherwise dispose them to feel anxiety, frustration, and impotence, leading them to a new – if often extreme and extremely unrealistic – sense of hope, confidence, and self-righteousness.

Whether or not this will lead to militance and outright insurrection is hard to predict. Many factors influence the ways individuals and groups respond to an apocalyptic message. Quiet waiting is a possibility, as are withdrawal,

21 Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 87–125 argued that religion offers both a "model of" and a "model for" existence. In general, it has been assumed that it is one and the same model that simultaneously serves both purposes. In apocalypticism, however, the two models are not just separate, but stand in pointed opposition to one another. Thus, the "model of" existence governs the present state of affairs, which is taken to be hopelessly flawed, while the "model for" is set in the future, and is used to denounce and correct the perceived failings in the "model of." This tension between an intolerable "is" and an eagerly anticipated "ought, will, and must be" makes religious discourse an instrument, not for the reproduction of culture (as in cases where the two models are isomorphic), but for critique and transformation. And when the future is patterned after an ideal set in the past (either recent or primordial), it can become an instrument of reaction and/or restoration.

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proselytization, despair, and rebellion. One variable that has its importance is the way different apocalyptic texts handle the question of agency. Thus, apocalypses that attribute the anticipated salvific acts predominantly or exclusively to a divine actor can console and reassure their audiences, predisposing them to a period of calm, patient waiting. In contrast, texts that ascribe these acts to exceptional, but wholly human subjects – particularly to collective subjects like a nation, sect, band of the righteous, or chosen people – are more prone to foster attitudes of militance and activism.

In general, one can understand apocalypticism as a religious style that gives voice to the interests and latent consciousness of the dispossessed and defensive. By this I mean to indicate sectors of society that have lost power, prestige, wealth, confidence, and/or security within their historic memory, or who feel acutely threatened by such loss in the present. As examples, one could point to displaced elites, marginal intellectuals, those deprived of patrons, peoples in exile, and classes threatened with structural obsolescence. Within the ancient world, however, apocalypses are most frequently associated with those who would extricate conquered nations from the grasp of foreign empires and who, toward that end, seek to recuperate native kingly rule.[22]

As we have seen, Darius's inscriptions can be understood as an attempt to freeze both political and historic process by misrepresenting the Great King as God's chosen savior and the perfecter of creation. Apocalyptic texts use the same narrative line and draw on the same repertoire of images and themes as imperial propaganda, but they do so to very different purpose. By recalibrating the temporal schema ever so slightly – putting woes in the present rather than the recent past, salvation in the near future rather than the present – they speak for the nationalist rebels who periodically challenged world empires. Instead of Darius's voice, we hear that of his enemies: Açina, Nidintu-Bel, Fravarti, Tritantaxma, and their brethren. Although such leaders occasionally met with success (Judah Maccabee, for instance), more often they ended their lives nailed to crosses and impaled on stakes, after which they became

22 Along these lines, Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 94 has written insightfully.

> In the Near Eastern context, two elements are crucial: scribalism and kingship. The *situation* of apocalypticism seems to me to be the cessation of native kingship; the *literature* of apocalypticism appears to me to be the expression of archaic, scribal wisdom as it comes to lack a royal patron.... [T]he *apocalyptic pattern* [involves the perception] that the wrong king is on the throne, that the cosmos will be thereby destroyed, and that the right god will either restore proper native kingship (his terrestrial counterpart) or will assume kingship himself ...

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characters in the victor's self-serving texts. Before that, however, they were heroes and authors in texts of their own, texts we characterize as apocalyptic.

5 The Secret Life of Texts

While most rebellions fail, the texts rebels produce may linger on, remaining available for revision, redaction, and subsequent reuse of unforeseen sorts. Over the course of their transmission they can gain novel audiences, expanding their range of applicability as they do so. In the process, however, they lose the specificity of their original context and world of reference, while also coming in for some highly creative, not to say tortuous, hermeneutics.

Even victors' texts can follow a similar trajectory, moving into new contexts where they are adapted for purposes quite different from those of their original authors and patrons. So it is with the propaganda employed by Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty, who began his career as a rebel against the Median empire, and who triumphed successively over Medians, Lydians, and Babylonians alike. An interesting step in his path to imperial power is preserved in the Akkadian text known as the "Cyrus-cylinder," which was written shortly after his conquest of Babylon (12 October 539 BCE), with the help of Babylonian priests. The second half of this text is similar to Darius's inscriptions at Susa, as the king speaks in the first person, announcing his titles, lineage, and charismatic legitimation; recounting his deeds, especially those of restoration and pacification; and pronouncing a final benediction. The first half of the inscription follows a different pattern, however. Here, Cyrus's scribes told the Babylonian populace that their king, Nabonidus (r. 556–539) had committed a series of cultic offenses, as a result of which their chief god had withdrawn support from him and conferred it on another.

> He scanned and looked through all the countries, searching for a righteous ruler … He pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anšan, and declared him to be ruler of all the world…. Marduk, the great lord, a protector of his people, beheld with great pleasure Cyrus's good deeds and his upright mind, and ordered him to march against his city Babylon. He made him set out on the road to Babylon, going at his side like a real friend. Without any battle, he made him enter his town Babylon, sparing Babylon any calamity. He delivered into his hands Nabonidus, the king who did not worship Marduk. All the inhabitants of Babylon … bowed to Cyrus and kissed his feet, jubilant that he had received the kingship. Happily they greeted him as a master through whose help they had come

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> to life from death and had been spared damage and disaster, and they worshiped his name.[23]

This text, which is shrewdly modeled after certain inscriptions of Aššurbanipal, is designed to smooth the transition from a native king to a foreign conqueror, to erase the role of force in the conquest, and to attract the support of local elites.[24] Toward those ends, it represents Cyrus as a much more pious and proper ruler than the man he defeated, ventriloquistically placing this conclusion in the mouth of the native God. Not only is the "Marduk" of this text made to select and hail Cyrus as king, he accompanies Cyrus on the march to Babylon, then delivers the city to him as the jubilant locals celebrate their new ruler.

One may be permitted to doubt if the scene enacted by Babylonians upon the loss of their independence was as simple or as unambiguously joyous an affair as Cyrus's script makes it appear.[25] Nationalist and anti-Persian sentiments were strong in Babylon for some time, and they remained focused on the native kingly line. This became clear during the rebellions Darius faced some seventeen years later, two of which were led by men claiming "I am Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabonidus. I am king in Babylon" (DBd and DBi; cf. DB §§16 and 49). Presumably each one claimed Marduk's favor with no less right than did Cyrus.

Cyrus's propaganda seems to have been most effective, not in Babylon itself, but among peoples he liberated from Babylonian rule, on whom the Persian yoke rested a good deal more lightly than had that of Nabonidus and his predecessors. Nowhere was this truer than in Israel, which had suffered crushing defeats, failed rebellions, the loss of native rule, deportation of large sectors of its population, destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the course of the 6th century, all at the hands of the Babylonians. News of Cyrus's triumph carried quickly to Israel, and it seems likely that the Persian monarch established communications with some of the Israelite exile community resident

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23 Translation by A. Leo Oppenheim, slightly modified, in James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 315–316.

24 On the text's relation to Akkadian prototypes, see J. Harmatta, "The Literary Patterns of the Babylonian Edict of Cyrus," *Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 19 (1971): 217–31.

25 On Cyrus's conquest of Babylon, see the discussions of Briant *Histoire de l'empire perse*, op cit., pp. 50–55, Dandamaev *Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, op cit., pp. 39–65, A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Babylonian Evidence of Achaemenian Rule in Mesopotamia," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 545–551.

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in Babylon. The policies he adopted would fulfill their fondest desires, for he granted permission to return from captivity and rebuild the Temple (*II Chronicles* 36:22–23; cf. *Ezra* 1:1–11 and 5:13–6:5). It is in this immediate context that an influential Israelite text used imagery and theology similar to that found in the propaganda of Cyrus and Darius.

> Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb;
> "I am the Lord, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone,
> who spread out the earth …
> Who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose';
> saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundations shall be laid.'"
> Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
> whose right hand I have grasped,
> to subdue nations before him
> and ungird the loins of kings,
> to open doors before him
> that gates may not be closed:
> "I will go before you
> and level the mountains,
> I will break in pieces the doors of bronze
> and cut asunder the bars of iron,
> I will give you the treasures of darkness
> and the hoards in secret places,
> that you may know that it is I, the Lord
> the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
>
> ISAIAH 44:24–45:3

One should probably understand the authorship of this text as overdetermined, for several ventriloquists adopt the persona of Yahweh.[26] Prime among them are the scribes responsible for Cyrus's propaganda, who persuaded Israel to accept Persian rule with some of the same strategies they had deployed in Babylon: endorsement of Cyrus by the local deity, who calls him by name, takes his hand, and walks alongside him to the lands he delivers unto him. More immediate, however, is an Israelite voice that celebrates liberation from the Babylonians and seeks to reconcile his countrymen to the odd, but inescapable fact that God had chosen a foreigner as His instrument for the rebuilding of

26 Morton Smith, "II Isaiah and the Persians," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83 (1963): 415–421.

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Jerusalem and the Temple – acts that would set right the cosmos – rather than an heir of the Davidic line. Indeed, Yahweh hails Cyrus portentously, calling him "my anointed" (*māšīaḥ* [whence English *messiah*]; LXX χριστός), the only time the Hebrew Bible uses this title for someone outside the covenant community and the first time it expands its sense to denote one not just a king, but also a savior.

Tracing the influence of the messianic tradition inaugurated by this passage would require an encyclopedia unto itself.[27] In conclusion, I would simply note two of its stranger reverberations in the twentieth century. First, when Woodrow Wilson came to Europe in 1919, promoting his Fourteen Points as the basis for a just and lasting peace, Nathan Söderblom, Archbishop of the Swedish National Church, Professor of History of Religions at Uppsala University, and a leading authority on Iranian religions, sent him a telegram with an elegant allusion. His message consisted of excerpts from *Isaiah* 45, starting with the phrase "Thus says the Lord to his anointed," but omitting the name of Cyrus. In this fashion, he apparently hoped to suggest that the idealistic American president might play the same role for Europe that the Persian monarch had played for Babylon and Israel: savior, rebuilder, and God's prince of peace. This well-intentioned gesture turned controversial, however, when some Swedes took it more literally than its author intended and polemicized that Wilson could just as well be Antichrist as the Messiah.[28]

Second, there is the name a certain Vernon Howell (1959–1993) took for himself in 1990, before winning notoriety in Waco's flames. Although Howell stated in his legal petition for a change of name that he desired a name he could use in his work as an entertainer, later events reveal a deeper meaning and purpose. Thus, his new name served to announce his claim that he united within himself the qualities of the two foremost messianic figures of the Hebrew Bible. And if his first name – "David" – made transparent reference to the line of Israelite kings, his surname did similar service for the Achaemenians, since "Koresh" is the standard Hebrew transcription of Old Persian *Kuruš*, the man known to us as "Cyrus" and to Isaiah as Yahweh's chosen and anointed.[29]

27 See John F.A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

28 Thus Henning Melander, *President Wilson och Cyrus-profetian* (Huddinge: Författarens eget Forlag ["The Author's own publishing house"], 1919).

29 James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

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CHAPTER 7

Religion, Empire, and the Spectre of Orientalism: A Recent Controversy in Achaemenid Studies

1

Although Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, Pierre Briant, Amélie Kuhrt, Margaret Cool Root, Josef Wiesehöfer, and other participants in the Achaemenid History Workshop profoundly transformed our understanding of the Achaemenid empire, members of that group devoted surprisingly little attention to the role of religion.[1] Conceivably, they thought the question of little importance, but to one like myself who has come to recognize religion as the primary ideological system of any ancient society, penetrating virtually all aspects of culture, such a lacuna seems particularly regrettable. This left the topic to others – scholars like Mary Boyce,[2] Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin,[3] Gherardo

1 This chapter was originally published in the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 72 (2013): 253–65. Meetings of the Workshop began in 1983 and ran through 1990. To judge from the published volumes that followed, *Achaemenid History* 1–8 (1987–94), only one presentation took some aspect of religion as its chief topic, and that by a scholar who participated in the meetings on no other occasion: Mary Boyce, "The Religion of Cyrus the Great," *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory* (1988), pp. 5–31. While the chief organizers occasionally touched on religion in some of their publications, none devoted a monograph to the topic prior to Wouter Henkelmann, *Achaemenid History XIV: The other gods who are: Studies in Elamite-Iranian acculturation based on the Persepolis Fortification tablets* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2008). Even articles on the topic by members of this group are extremely rare.

2 Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. 2 Under the Achaemenids* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982).

3 Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Religion et politique, de Cyrus à Xerxès," *Persica* 3 (1967): 1–9, idem, "La religion des Achéménides," in Gerold Walser, ed., *Beiträge zur Achämenidengeschichte* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1972), pp. 59–82, idem, "Le dieu de Cyrus," in *Commémoration Cyrus. Vol. 3* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 11–21.

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Gnoli,[4] Heidemarie Koch,[5] Martin Schwartz,[6] – whose views were relatively unaffected by the novel directions opened up by the Workshop. In large measure, these scholars continued to focus on a set of familiar questions that remained within a strictly religious domain, having relatively little connection to other aspects of history, politics, and culture. Were the Achaemenian rulers Zoroastrians or not? Monotheists or polytheists? Were their policies toward other religions marked by particular tolerance? Did they draw chiefly on Indo-Iranian traditions, or were they also influenced by other religions of the Ancient Near East?[7]

Within the last several years, that situation has changed considerably, as the question of Achaemenian religion has begun to receive not only more, but also different kinds of attention. Three developments are particularly noteworthy. First, the massive archive of the Persepolis Fortification Tablets has been studied much more intensively by Wouter Henkelman and a few others, improving our understanding of state support for sacrificial practice, the place of priests in the imperial apparatus, and the importance of Elamite gods and traditions in Achaemenid cultic activity.[8] Second, building on the

4 Gherardo Gnoli, "Considerazioni sulla religione degli Achemenidi alla luce di una recente teoria," *Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni* 35 (1964): 239–50, idem, "Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Achémenides," in *Commémoration Cyrus: Hommage Universel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 117–90, idem, "La religion des Achéménides," in *De Zoroastre à Mani. Quatre leçons au Collège de France* (Paris: Travaux de l'Institut d'études iraniennes de l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1985), pp. 53–72.

5 Heidemarie Koch, *Die religiöse Verhältnisse der Dareioszeit* (Göttingen: Göttinger Orientforschungen, 1977), eadem, "Götter und ihre Verehrung im achämenidischen Persien," *Zeitschrift fur Assyriologie* 77 (1987): 239–78, eadem, "Zur Religion und Kulten im achämenidischen Kernland," in Jean Kellens, ed., *La religion iranienne à l'époque achéménide* Ghent: Iranica Antiqua, 1991), pp. 87–109, eadem, "Iranische Religion im achaimenidischen Zeitalter," in Reinhard G. Kratz, ed., *Religion und Religionskontakte im Zeitalter der Achämeniden* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), pp. 11–26.

6 Martin Schwartz, "The Religion of Achaemenian Iran," in Ilya Gershevitch, ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran. Vol. 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 664–97.

7 For a summary and evaluation of the literature to that date (and a good deal beyond), see Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "La religion des Achéménides: État de la question," *Studia Iranica* 9 (1980): 325–39.

8 Henkelman, *The other gods who are*, op cit., idem, "Animal sacrifice and 'external' exchange in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets," in Heather D. Baker and Michael Jursa, eds.,

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earlier work of Margaret Cool Root,[9] Mark Garrison has studied the iconography of glyptic art in relation to that of monumental reliefs, with particular attention to scenes of heroic combat, actions in front of altars, and those that develop a "panoptic/imperial perspective," within which the king is assimilated to a numinous state beyond normal categories of time and space, while remaining powerfully operative in the realm of the human and historic.[10]

Approaching the Babylonian Economy (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2005), pp. 137–65, idem, "De goden van Iran: (breuk)lijnien in een religieus landschap, *ca.* 4000–330 v. Chr.," *Phoenix* 51 (2005): 130–72, idem, "Parnakka's Feast: *šip* in Pārsa and Elam," in Javier Alvarez-Mon and Mark B. Garrison, *Parsa and Elam* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraun, 2011), pp. 89–166. In significant measure, Henkelman's writings on religion stand in critical relation to the earlier work of Heidemarie Koch, cited above in note 4. Also noteworthy are Morrison Handley-Schachler, "The *Lan* Ritual in the Persepolis Fortification Texts," *Achaemenid History* 11 (1998): 195–204 and Shahrokh Razmjou, "The *Lan* Ceremony and Other Ritual Ceremonies in the Achaemenid Period: The Persepolis Fortification Tablets," *Iran* 42 (2004): 103–17.

9 Margaret Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), Mark B. Garrison and Margaret Cool Root, *Seals on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets. Vol. I: Images of Heroic Encounter*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 2001).

10 Mark B. Garrison, "*By the Favor of Auramazdā*: Kingship and the Divine in the early Achaemenid Period," in Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber, eds., *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship* (Louvain: Peeters, 2011), pp. 15–104, idem, "A Persepolis Fortification Seal on the Tablet MDP 11 308 (Louvre Sb 13078)," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 55 (1996): 15–35, idem, "The Seals of Ašbazana (Aspathines)," *Achaemenid History XI: Studies in Persian History: Essays in Memory of David M. Lewis* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1998), pp. 115–31, idem, "Achaemenid iconography as evidenced by glyptic art: subject matter, social function, audience and diffusion," in Christoph Uehlinger, ed., *Images as media: Sources for the cultural history of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean* (*1st millennium BCE*) (Fribourg: University Press and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), pp. 115–63. See also the earlier work of P.R.S. Moorey, "Aspects of Worship and Ritual on Achaemenid Seals," in *Akten des VII. Internationalen Kongresses für Iran: Kunst und Archäologie* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1979), pp. 218–26.

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Third, the extremely rigorous philological work of Jean Kellens,[11] Prods Oktor Skjærvø,[12] Clarisse Herrenschmidt,[13] and Éric Pirart[14] has shown that the religious terminology, symbology, and ideology of the Achaemenid royal inscriptions are more closely related to those of the Avesta than was earlier recognized. Although these scholars differ somewhat in the inferences they draw,

11 The discovery that inaugurated most recent philological advances in the study of Achaemenian religion in its relation to the Avestan texts was Jean Kellens' recognition of clear Avestan parallels to the throne-names adopted by Darius and Artaxerxes at *Yasna* 48.4, 31.7 and 29.10. The former comparison is particularly strong, since the compound *Dāraya-vaʰuš* ("he who holds firm the good") includes the Avestan, and not the Old Persian noun denoting "(religious) good" (i.e. *vohu*, rather than *naiba*). See Jean Kellens and Éric Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1988–91), Vol. 1, pp. 40–41. Kellens further contributions on the topic include "Trois réflexions sur la religion des Achéménides," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 2 (1976): 113–32, idem, "Die Religion der Achämeniden," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 10 (1983): 107–23, "Questions préalables," in *La religion iranienne à l'époque achéménide*, op cit., pp. 81–86 "Les Achéménides dans le contexte indo-iranien," *Topoi* Supplement 1 (1997): 287–97, "L'idéologie religieuse des inscriptions achéménides," *Journal asiatique* 290 (2002): 417–64, and "Les Achéménides et l'Avesta" in *Séptimo Centenario de los Estudios Orientales en Salamanca* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2012), pp. 551–58.

12 Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Avestan Quotations in Old Persian? Literary Sources of the Old Persian Inscriptions," *Irano-Judaica* 4 (1999): 3–64, idem, "The Achaemenids and the Avesta," in Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, eds., *Birth of the Persian Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 52–84.

13 See in particular Clarisse Herrenschmidt and Jean Kellens, "La Question du rituel dans le mazdéisme ancien et achéménide," *Archive de Science sociale des religions* 85 (1994): 45–67, Clarisse Herrenschmidt and Bruce Lincoln, "Healing and Salt Waters: The Bifurcated Cosmos of Mazdaean Religion," *History of Religions* 43 (2004): 269–83. Also relevant are other publications of Herrenschmidt that rely on exceptionally perceptive readings of the Achaemenian inscriptions, rather than comparative philology. Along these lines, see Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les créations d'Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58, eadem, "Aspects universalistes de la religion et de l'idéologie de Darius I^{er}," in G. Gnoli and L. Lancioti, eds., *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1987), pp. 617–25, eadem, "Manipulations religieuses de Darius I^{er}," in Marie-Madeleine Macfoux, ed., *Mélanges Pierre Lévèque* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987), pp. 195–207, eadem, "Le moi mazdéen et les âmes," *Iranian Journal of Anthropology* 1 (2002): 19–31, eadem, "Political Theology of the Achaemenids," in Giovanni Filoramo, ed., *Teologie Politiche: Modelli a confronto* (Brescia, La Morcelliana, 2005), pp. 31–44.

14 Éric Pirart, "Le nom des Perses," *Journal asiatique* 283 (1995): 57–68, idem, "Le mazdéisme politique de Darius I^{er}," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 45 (2002): 121–51.

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all have shown that consideration of the Avestan evidence greatly nuances our understanding of the Old Persian.[15]

My own contributions have fallen mostly within this third group, that of comparative philology.[16] They have differed from those of Kellens and others, however, in a number of ways. First, I have drawn not only on Avestan, but also on Pahlavi (Middle Persian) sources more than have my colleagues. Second, like Albert de Jong, I have been more inclined to make use of Greek authors, especially when their testimony is confirmed by Iranian sources.[17] Third, I have called particular attention to the Achaemenian creation account, an extremely subtle and crucially important text that figures prominently in a large proportion of the royal inscriptions, has several significant variants, and far-reaching implications.

In recent years, I published two books on Achaemenid religion, one a short volume intended for the general public[18] and the other a denser, more ponderous text directed to specialists.[19] The former included a deliberately provocative final chapter and an appendix that extended the discussion to contemporary concerns, raising the question of whether empires of all ages and sorts engender the same sort of unsolvable problems for themselves as the result of their inevitable contradictions.

Most responses to this line of analysis have been quite positive, with one notable exception.[20] Writing in the Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies

15 Thus, Skjærvø and Pirart take the evidence to support the view that the Achaemenian rulers were, indeed, Zoroastrians. Kellens and Herrenschmidt are much more circumspect, observing first, that obtaining a clear definition of "Zoroastrianism" is far from unproblematic, and second, that the correspondences between Old Persian and Avestan can be explained equally well as reflecting parallel inheritances from a shared (Indo-)Iranian tradition. Along these lines, see also the overview provided by Katharina Knäpper, *Die Religion der frühen Achaimeniden in ihrem Verhältnis zum Avesta* (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2011).

16 Most of my publications on the topic have been collected in Bruce Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind:" Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Louvain: Peeters, 2012; Acta Iranica, vol. 53).

17 Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi. Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997).

18 Bruce Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Torture: The Case of Achaemenian Persia, with a Postscript on Abu Ghraib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

19 Idem, *"Happiness for Mankind:" Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project*, op cit.

20 Reviews appeared in a wide range of journals and were generally positive, although both Michael Stausberg (*Numen* 56 [2009]: 477–89) and Michael Kozuh (*Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129 [2009]: 287–93) expressed some serious reservations, while offering criticism on numerous points of interpretation and detail. Relatively enthusiastic in their response were Prods Oktor Skjærvø and Yuhan Vevaina (*American History Review* 113 [2008]: 945–46), Tytus K. Mikolajczak (*Bryn Mawr College Review* 2008.05.16),

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last December, Henry Colburn voiced strenuous objections.[21] Although I believe he misconstrues my argument, his critique is serious and principled, even if overstated. It is also eminently useful, as it lets me clarify some points, elaborate others, and correct some misunderstandings. Colburn advances three major points and I will follow his order of presentation, for the three are interrelated and his case is cumulative.

2

Colburn begins by declaring "the bulk of Lincoln's book … is based on the implicit and unproven assumption that the Achaemenids were Zoroastrians,"[22] although I repeatedly state otherwise and explain my position with some care.[23] Apparently he takes me to be either confused or disingenuous, as he states "Despite his claim to be uncommitted on the point, Lincoln's argument relies to a significant degree on the Achaemenids being Zoroastrian after all, specifically in a manner consistent with much later Zoroastrianism; otherwise his frequent citation of these texts serves no meaningful purpose."[24]

Colburn rightly observes that the relation of Achaemenian rulers and society to "Zoroastrianism" is a vexed question, on which prolonged debate has been inconclusive.[25] On this we have no disagreement. He also rightly notes

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John R. Hall (*Journal of Religion* 88 [2008]: 430–31), Marita Gronvoll (*Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 12 [2009]: 132–34), David P. Gushee (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 76 [2009]: 489–92), Steven W. Hirsch (*International History Review* 31 [2009[: 371–73), John Hyland (*The Historian* 71 [2009]: 589–90), and Simon Staffell (*The Bible and Critical Theory* 5 [2009]: 17). The American Society of Oriental Research also gave the book its prestigious Frank Moore Cross Award in 2008 for the most substantial volume related to ancient Near Eastern and eastern Mediterranean epigraphy, text and/or tradition.

21 Henry P. Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire: Meditations on Bruce Lincoln's *Religion, Empire, and Torture*," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 54/2 (December 2011): 87–103. Colburn opens by characterizing my work as "misinformed and biased," so marred by "severe methodological flaws" as to have "potentially insidious consequences" (p. 87). A similarly high level of invective recurs throughout his essay.

22 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," p. 88.

23 Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Torture*, esp. pp. xiii and 15–16.

24 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," p. 88.

25 For a convenient summary of the longstanding debate, see Herrenschmidt, "La religion des Achéménides: État de la question," op cit. In recent decades, the strongest advocate of the view that the Achaemenians were unambiguously Zoroastrians (albeit of a somewhat atypical sort) has been Mary Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism, Vol. 2*, op. cit., and Skjærvø, "Avestan Quotations in Old Persian?," op cit., adds weighty support to that view. The issue remains far from settled, however, and the evidence is sufficiently ambiguous as to

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that Elamite deities figure prominently in the Persepolis Fortification Texts and merit fuller attention than I devoted to them.[26] His chief concern, however, is not to pursue the implications of Elamite or extra-Iranian data, but to preempt the introduction of evidence from Avestan and Pahlavi texts in discussions of Achaemenid history and religion. Apparently, Colburn would judge such evidence admissible only if one could demonstrate that a) Cyrus, Darius, and their successors were unquestionably Zoroastrians (whatever that means) and b) the relation of their religious commitments to the traditions preserved in the Avesta (parts of which were composed much earlier than their reign) and the Pahlavi texts (committed to writing much later) was one of "unchanged continuity."[27] This will strike anyone competent in Iranian languages and the history of Iranian religions as extraordinary, given the unambiguous and extensive relation between Old Persian, Avestan, and Pahlavi that has been established by a century and a half of research in comparative linguistics.[28]

Colburn apparently has little grounding in these disciplines and methods, as revealed by such statements as: "The only direct link between the

admit several different lines of interpretation. Thus, *pace* Boyce and Skjærvø, Jean Kellens more prudently concludes "L'idéologie qui a présidé à l'organisation de l'empire achéménide était, par nombre d'aspects ancrée dans la religion spécifiquement iranienne dont l'Avesta constitue le plus ancien témoignage ("L'idéologie religieuse des inscriptions achéménides," op cit., pp. 458–59). This formulation acknowledges the strong correspondence between Achaemenian and Avestan religion, but posits no direct influence of one on the other, nor any moment of royal conversion. Indeed, it refuses to imagine a readily identifiable "Zoroastrianism" to which one might convert. Rather, it accounts for the commonalities by tracing them to a common Iranian tradition that informs both the Avesta and the royal inscriptions, but makes its first *textual* appearance in oldest strata of the former. My position is consistent with that of Kellens, here and in his statement: "Mon programme n'est plus de chercher à savoir si les Achéménides étaient ou non « zoroastriens », mais quel développement de l'idéologie indo-iranienne leur est dû" ("Les Achéménides dans le contexte indo-iranien," p. 295).

26 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," p. 89. Most recently on the Elamite contributions to Achaemenian religion, see Henkelmann, *The other gods who are*, op cit.

27 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," pp. 89–90: "Lincoln cannot unequivocally link Achaemenid religious ideology with Zoroastrian practice and belief without assuming centuries of unchanged continuity between them, and this assumption can no longer be made without some justification." Although this sentence is crucial to Colburn's position, it contains so many contortions ("cannot unequivocally … without assuming … without justification") as to make its logic opaque.

28 See, for instance, Rüdiger Schmitt, ed., *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1989), esp. pp. 1–105 Manfred Mayrhofer, "L'indo-iranien," in Françoise Bader, ed., *Langues indo-européennes* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1994), pp. 101–20, esp. 115–20, or Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Old Iranian," in Gernot Windfuhr, ed., *The Iranian Languages* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 43–195.

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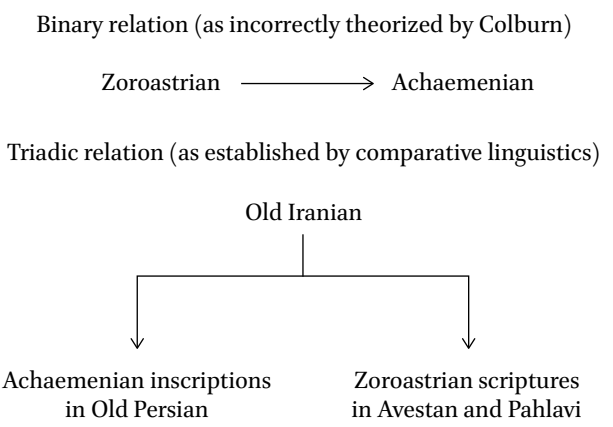
Binary relation (as incorrectly theorized by Colburn)
Zoroastrian
Achaemenian
Triadic relation (as established by comparative linguistics)
Old Iranian
Achaemenian inscriptions in Old Persian
Zoroastrian scriptures in Avestan and Pahlavi

FIGURE 7.1 Binary and triadic understandings of the relations in question

Achaemenids and Zoroastrianism is the name of the god Auramazdā."[29] Here, two corrections are necessary. First, the large majority of Old Persian lexemes find correspondences in Avestan and Pahlavi, including the names of deities and demonic powers; verbs for sacrifice, worship, creation; nouns and adjectives denoting the ideal state of persons living and dead; and other core items of religious discourse.[30] Even more significantly, Colburn misunderstands how these items are related, for it is not a question of a "direct link," i.e. a binary relation of unmediated influence exercised by Zoroastrian religion on Achaemenian rulers, but rather a mediated triadic relation between Old Persian, {Avestan and Pahlavi}, and the Old Iranian language of which they are cognate descendants (Figure 7.1).

Cognate relations extend not only to individual lexemes, but to phrases, narratives, structures, topoi, and ideological constructs.[31] In each case, however,

29 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," p. 88.

30 By way of statistical example, fully two-thirds of the Old Persian lexemes beginning with the letter *a-* that are listed in Roland G. Kent, *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1953), pp. 164–74 have cognates in Avestan (78/116). Among the Old Persian lexemes that recur in Avestan and Pahlavi are the divine names Mithra, Anāhita, and Drva, the demonic title Drauga, the verbs *yad-* ("to sacrifice, worship") and *dā-* ("to establish, create"), the adjectives *ṛtāvan* ("truthful, righteous") and *šiyāta* ("happy, blessed"), the abstractions *ṛta* ("truth, right, as the basis of cosmic and moral order"), *dāta* ("law"), *vašna* ("divine will"), *fraša* ("wonder, ideal state of cosmic perfection"), and *farnah* ("divine favor, royal charisma").

31 For the fullest study to date, see Skjærvø, "Avestan Quotations in Old Persian?," op cit. While Skjærvø regards these data as evidence of direct Zoroastrian influence on the Achaemenians, they are equally explicable as common inheritances from a shared Iranian

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each branch of the tradition had its own historic trajectory, in the course of which it modified inherited materials in ways attuned to specific interests, contingencies, and contexts. The relation among the Old Persian, Avestan, and Pahlavi texts is thus one of resemblance and overlap, not perfect congruence. Accordingly, comparisons that attend to nuanced differences, as well as broad similarities help sharpen our sense of how the terms were used – and the ideas developed – within each branch of the shared tradition.

This is the method employed by all editors and translators of the Old Persian inscriptions since they were first deciphered and without intra-Iranian comparisons of this sort, many terms, phrases, and lines of thought would remain incomprehensible. The method is hardly novel or controversial, although I do apply it to a larger item of discourse than have most of my predecessors, i.e. the creation account that occupies a singularly prominent position in the Achaemenian inscriptions.[32] The way they told that story, moreover, is so close to creation accounts in Zoroastrian texts that one must understand these narratives as cognates (Table 7.1). Given that the Pahlavi variants are more expansive than their Old Persian counterparts, considering their details can help one recognize important implications in the more condensed discourse of the royal inscriptions. Close analysis of these materials advances our understanding of Achaemenid constructions of time, space, number, morality, and action, all of which had consequences for the empire's conduct of international relations, warfare, taxation, palace-building, garden design, and other practical matters.

Comparison of this sort has its risks and might be open to criticism on some of its details. Colburn, however, does not engage at that level and he seems relatively uninterested in the question of imperial religion, which for me is central.[33] In contrast, his chief concern is to defend the Achaemenids against

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tradition. Regarding the broader Indo-Iranian and Indo-European background, see Rüdiger Schmitt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), and Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: aspects of Indo-European* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

32 Twenty three inscriptions begin with the cosmogonic account, which is always the first paragraph of any inscription in which it occurs. This total represents almost three quarters (23/32) of the inscriptions that have significant length, i.e. those of three paragraphs or more. The most important prior discussion of these materials is Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les créations d'Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58.

33 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," p. 88n9, indicates that for his discussion of religious matters, he relied primarily on Garrison, "*By the Favor of Auramazdā*," op cit. While admirable, Garrison's paper is concerned to assess the religious content of glyptic images, not to provide a broader understanding. The only other

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TABLE 7.1 Achaemenian and Zoroastrian variants of the cosmogonic narrative

	Achaemenian inscriptions in Old Persian	**Zoroastrian scriptures in Older Avestan**[a]	**Zoroastrian scriptures in Pahlavi**
Agent responsible	Wise Lord (*Auramazdā*)	Wise Lord (*Ahura Mazdā*)	Wise Lord (*Ohrmazd*)
Verbs used to describe the original acts of creation	*dā-* ("to establish, set in place for the first time")	*dā-* ("to give, establish, set in place for the first time"); also *taš-* ("to craft, shape")	*dādan* ("to give, create"); also *brēhēnīdan* ("to create, fashion") and *winnardan* ("to order, arrange, establish")
Items created	1) Earth (*būmi*) 2) Sky (*asmān*) 3) Mankind (*martiya*) 4) Happiness (*šiyāti*)	1) Heavenly bodies (*xᵛan, māh*) 2) Earth (*ząm*) 3) Water (*āp*) 4) Plant (*uruuarā*) 5) Wind (*vāta*) 6) Animal (*gauu*)	1) Sky (*asmān*) 2) Water (*āb*) 3) Earth (*zamīg*) 4) Plant (*urwān*) 5) Animal (*gāw*) 6) Mankind (*mardōm*)
Status of items created	Unified (all named in the singular); absolutely good (because created by the Wise Lord)	Absolutely good (because created by the Wise Lord)	Unified (all named in the singular); absolutely good (because created by the Wise Lord)
Agent who corrupts the original creations	Implicitly, the Lie (*Draụga*)	Evil Spirit (*Aŋra Mainiiu*)	Evil Spirit (*Ahriman*); in some variants, the Lie (*Druz*) or Foul Spirit (*Gannāg Mēnōg*)
Wise Lord's response to corruption	Makes Darius (or one of his successors) king	Entrusts the Good Religion to Zarathuštra	Entrusts the Good Religion to Zarathuštra

a The fullest list of creations in the Older Avesta is that of *Yasna* 44.3–6, where the creation of humanity is implied by the pronoun *kaēibiiō* and made explicit in the shorter list of *Yasna* 48.5–6. The list of creations found in the Younger Avesta shows some variation, but generally follows the same order as that in the Pahlavi texts. Cf. *Yasna* 5.1, 19.1–4, 19.8, *Visprad* 7.4, and *Vidaēuuadāt* 19.35.

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unjustified and prejudicial, but longstanding and stereotyped charges of cruelty and decadence. Since he reads me as using Avestan and Pahlavi texts to renew such slanders, he urges that the comparative evidence be dismissed *a priori*.

3

As it happens, the charges Colburn is most eager to rebut – cruelty and decadence – are hardly present in my text. These terms and others associated with them ("savagery," "sadism," "despotism," "luxury," "effeminacy," etc.) occur in four passages only, where they are without exception identified as polemic misrepresentations of the Persians by Greek and Roman authors. Typical is the following passage.

> Obviously enough, foreign authors do not report things from a Persian perspective and one has to guard against naturalizing and reproducing their Orientalist tropes as regards Persian luxury, decadence, despotism, and palace intrigue, to cite some of the most common examples. But if one exercises reasonable caution, there is a wealth of information to be gathered from Herodotus, Aeschylus, Xenophon, Aelian, or Polyaenus, as Pierre Briant has amply demonstrated, and the reporting of even so biased an author as Ctesias can prove useful, particularly if one dispenses with his interpretive additions. What he – and others – describe with disdain as "luxury" (Greek *tryphē*, a term that has connotations of wantonness, self-indulgence, softness and effeminacy), for instance, can provide a useful picture not only of Persian wealth, but of the extent to which it was deployed in ritual practice and symbolic displays, the significance of which was utterly lost on outsiders. This is true, for instance, in the case of the Great King's banquet table, which was simultaneously a means of redistribution, a display of royal generosity, and a microcosmic image of the empire at large. A similar mix of reasonable accuracy in the details and very partial understanding as regards evaluation and interpretation is also evident in Greek reports of many practices through which the

works on religion Colburn cites are Henkelman, *The other gods who are*, op cit., focused on the Elamite heritage, and a brief paper by Mary Boyce, "The Continuity of the Zoroastrian Quest," in Whitfield Foy, ed., *Man's Religious Quest: A Reader* (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), pp. 603–19. His ignorance of the literature cited in notes 11–14 above is a serious omission, as is his inattention to earlier works on the subject (listed in notes 2–7).

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> Persians instantiated royal virtues, including those the Greeks (mis)construed as arrogance, cruelty, and the like.[34]

Here and elsewhere I note the problem posed by Ctesias, the value of whose eye-witness testimony is significantly mitigated by the prejudicial nature of his perspective. Where I think one can use comparative evidence from the Zoroastrian scriptures to reinterpret Ctesias's reports, Colburn rejects that possibility and is particularly scandalized that I use this method on an incident he judges so "elaborate and outlandish" as to prompt incredulity *prima facie*.[35] The datum is extreme, to be sure, but Colburn errs in believing I construe it as synecdochic, i.e. that I treat it as a representative part that typifies the whole, showing Achaemenid Persia to have been exceptionally brutal, even by ancient standards. On the contrary, if this narrative has any value, it is as a limit case, whose excesses reveal the extent to which even a relatively non-brutal regime will compromise, pervert, and contradict its core principles to defend itself when scrupulous adherence to those same principles would place it in serious danger.

Such a situation arose after the battle of Cunaxa (401 BCE), when two soldiers challenged official reports that Artaxerxes II had killed Cyrus the Younger in single combat. At issue is a central tenet of Achaemenian ideology that the relation of King to Rebel parallels that of Truth (the basis of cosmic, moral, and sociopolitical order) to the Lie (source of all evil, corruption, and strife). Just as Darius embedded this construct in the story of how he dispatched the deceitful Gaumāta,[36] and just as similar claims were made on behalf of Ardāšir (founder of the Sassanian dynasty),[37] so Artaxerxes personalized the victory

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34 Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Torture*, p. 14. Similar views are expressed in every passage where questions of cruelty or decadence arise, i.e. pp. 76 (on the royal banquet), 94 (the ordeal of the troughs), 138 (Parysatis), and 141 (Ctesias).

35 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenids," p. 91.

36 DB §13. The text is actually ambiguous regarding how much credit Darius takes for the death of Gaumāta (who is associated with the Lie at DB §§11 and 52, while Darius is associated with Truth at §63). Initially, he claims to have played the leading role in a collaborative effort ("I, *with a few men*, slew that Gaumāta the Magus" *adam* ***hadā kamnaiβiš martiyaiβiš*** *avam Gaumātam tayam magum avājanam*). In the next sentence, the others disappear and Darius takes sole responsibility ("A fortress named Sikayuvati, a land/people named Nisāya, in Media – there I slew him" *Sikayuvatiš nāmā didā, Nisāya nāmā dahyāuš Mādaiy – avadašim avājanam*).

37 The founding of the Sassanian dynasty is thematized as the triumph of Truth over the Lie in *Kārnāmag ī Ardāšir ī Pābagān* 2.13–22 (where the son of the last Arsacid king falsely takes credit for killing a deer that Ardāšir actually slew, thereby prompting – and justifying – Ardāšir's overthrow of the dynasty) and 8.7–9.9 (where Ardāšir kills his

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of Truth over Lie by claiming he slew his insurrectionary brother with his very own hands.

Three historians left accounts of the battle and recent research has shown Ctesias's version to be the most complete and revealing.[38] Whereas Deinon repeated imperial propaganda and Xenophon tailored events to reflect favorably on the defeated Cyrus, Ctesias offered details lacking in the others, providing medically precise descriptions of the wounds suffered and, more importantly, a critical perspective that challenged the official version by describing how an unnamed Carian and a certain Mithridates actually killed Cyrus.[39] When these soldiers indiscreetly boasted of the deed, it prompted a crisis, for were their story true, it followed that the king himself was a liar.

Ctesias reports that both men were swiftly subjected to painful punishments. This may, however, be an inexact characterization of how these practices were emically construed, since the Old Persian verb usually rendered "to punish" most literally means "to question, interrogate,"[40] while Elamite ver-

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greatest opponent, the malevolent serpent-lord Haftānbōxt by pouring molten brass into his mouth).

38 Sherylee R. Bassett, "The Death of Cyrus the Younger," *Classical Quarterly* 49 (1999): 473–83.

39 Deinon's account is preserved in Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 10, Xenophon's in *Anabasis* 1.8.24–29, and Ctesias's in Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 11. The fullest studies of these variants to date are Bassett, "The Death of Cyrus the Younger," op cit. and Christopher Tuplin, "Ctesias as Military Historian," in Josef Wiesehöfer, Robert Rollinger, and Giovanni Lanfranchi, eds., *Ktesias' Welt / Ctesias' World* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), pp. 449–88. See also Dominique Lenfant, *Ctésias de Cnide. La Perse, L'Inde, Autres fragments* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004), pp. cxi–cxii and Carsten Binder, *Plutarchs Vita des Artaxerxes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), p. 202. For a different evaluation, Joan Bigwood, "The Ancient Accounts of the Battle of Cunaxa," *American Journal of Philology* 104 (1983): 340–57.

40 Thus, the etymology of Old Persian *fraϑ-* (alternately, *prs-*) unambiguously relates it to verbs that denote the act of posing questions: Avestan *fras-* "to ask, inquire," Pahlavi *purs-* "to ask," Parthian *pwrs-* "to ask," Khotanese *puls-* "to ask," Kurdish *pirs-* "to ask," Sanskrit *pṛcchá́ti-* "to ask, question," Latin *precor* "to ask, beg, entreat, supplicate, request," Gothic *fraíhnan* (= German *fragen*) "to ask, question," Lithuanian *peršù* "to seek in marriage," etc. See further, Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Franke, 1959), pp. 821–22, Johnny Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), pp. 88–90 and Bruce Lincoln, "An Ancient Case of Interrogation and Torture," *Social Analysis* 53 (2009): 157–72. The action denoted by this verb was understood as a vigorous response on the king's part to the threat posed by the Lie. Particularly important for its meaning and significance is the advice Darius gave his successors.

> DB §55: You who may later be king here – Protect yourself boldly from the Lie! The man who is a liar, interrogate him so he is well-interrogated if you would think thus: "Let my land/people be healthy/secure." *tuvam kā, xšāyaϑiya haya aparam āhi, hacā*

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sions of the relevant passages use a metaphor that depicts the questioning as aggressive and forceful.[41] For his part, the Carian is said to have had his eyes gouged out and molten bronze dripped in his ear,[42] practices familiar from Darius's treatment of rebels in the first instance[43] and Zoroastrian judiciary ordeals in the second.[44] These comparanda cannot prove that such things were done to "the Carian," nor that he ever lived, for the story may be fiction, rumor, Artaxerxean propaganda designed to intimidate, or Ctesian slander designed to discredit. They do, however, make plausible that similar acts were part of the Achaemenian repertoire.[45] They also help one assess their symbolic and

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draᵘgā dṛšam patipayauvā, martiya, haya draᵘjana ahati, avam ufraštam pṛsā, yadi avaϑā, maniyāhaḷ: dahyāᵘšmaḷ duruvā ahati.

DB §64: You who may later be king here: That man who is a liar or who is a deceitdoer, do not be a friend to them. Interrogate them so they are well-interrogated. *tuvam kā, xšāyaϑiya haya aparam āhi, martiya, haya draᵘjana ahati hayavā zūrakara ahati, avaḷ mā daᵘštā biyā, ufraštādiš pṛsā.*

41 Elamite versions replace the verb *fraϑ-* with *miul-e hapi* (literally, to press oil) and thus describe such "questioning" as the extraction of truth through the application of pressure (psychological to be sure, and quite probably also physical). Cf. Walther Hinz and Heidemarie Koch, *Elamisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1987), pp. 619 and 941. Use of the English verb "to press" in the context of aggressive questioning is fully comparable.

42 Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 14.5.

43 At DB §§32 and 33, Darius describes his treatment of the two rebels who represented themselves as descendants of the Median dynasty, a claim of primacy he apparently regarded as a more serious lie than others.

I cut off his nose, his ears, and his tongue and I put out one of his eyes. He was held bound at my gate. All the people/army saw him.

adamšaḷ utā nāham utā gaᵘšā utā hizānam frājanam utāšaḷ 1 cašma āvajam; duvarayāmaḷ basta adāriya, haruvašim kāra avaḷna.

44 Ordeals by molten metal figure in both judiciary and eschatological contexts in the earliest stratum of the Avesta, most notably at *Yasna* 31.19, 32.7 and 51.9. The judiciary practices are treated more extensively in Pahlavi literature, e.g. *Dēnkard* 7.5.4–6 and the *Supplementary Texts to the Šāyest nē Šāyest* 15.14–19. *Kārnāmag Ardāšir ī Pābagān* 8.7–9.9 is also relevant, on which see note 39 above.

45 Two lengthy articles have appeared recently considering the violent punishments said to have been employed by the Achaemenians, with comparison to similar practices in the ancient Near East: Bruno Jacobs, "Grausame Hinrichtungen – friedliche Bilder: Zum Verhältnis der politischen Realität zu den Darstellungsszenarien der achämenidischen Kunst," in Martin Zimmermann, ed., *Extreme Formen von Gewalt in Bild und Text des Altertums* (Munich: Herbert Utz, 2009), pp. 121–53 and Robert Rollinger, "Extreme Gewalt und Strafgericht. Ktesias und Herodot als Zeugnisse für den Achaimenidenhof," in Bruno Jacobs and Robert Rollinger, eds., *Der Achämenidenhof / The Achaemenid Court* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 2010), pp. 559–666. Concerning Artaxerxes' treatment of the Carian, see Jacobs, pp. 121–23 and Rollinger, pp. 588 and 610–12. Colburn cites both articles.

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ideological content, since a) disfigurement of sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue) served to associate the accused with the misperception and miscommunication characteristic of the Lie,[46] and b) molten metal was theorized as a material instantiation of Truth that purifies liars by burning away the corrupting residues of their falsehood.[47]

Ctesias describes Mithridates' fate as even more gruesome than the Carian's and his report is sufficiently lurid to prompt strong skepticism. Judging the credibility of his testimony is always difficult, for in his capacity as court physician to Artaxerxes II, Ctesias was in a position to observe many things, but his ability to understand what he saw remained regrettably limited; worse still, he was consistently disposed toward sensationalism, condescension, and stereotypy. Regarding the ordeal of "the troughs" (or "boats," *skaphai*), we have only his testimony.

> Taking two troughs that have been made to fit with each other, they lie the man being punished in one on his back. Then, bringing in the other one, they fit them together in such a way as to leave the man's head, hands, and feet sticking out, while covering over the rest of his body. They give food to the man, and if he is not willing to eat, they force him by pricking his eyes. And when he has eaten, they pour milk mixed with honey into his mouth, and they pour it over his face. Then they turn his eyes constantly toward the sun and a multitude of flies, all settling down, covers up his face. And having done inside (the enclosure) that which is necessary for people to do when they have drunk and eaten, worms and

46 See such passages as *Yasna* 31.1 44.13, and 60.5, *Vīdaēuudāt* 16.18 and 17.11, which I have discussed in *"Happiness for Mankind"*, op cit., pp. 213–24. See also Jacobs, "Grausame Hinrichtungen – friedliche Bilder," p. 122.

47 Zoroastrianism theorizes fire as the material instantiation of Truth (*Aša*) and metal as the instantiation of Royal Power (*Xšaϑra*). Those whose veracity was doubted had molten metal (= Truth + Royal force) poured on their bodies, which would harm them only to the extent of their inherent falsehood. The most celebrated case is that of the high priest Ādurbad, son of Mahrspand, who is said to have had molten brass poured on his breast to demonstrate the absolute truth and orthodoxy of his religious doctrines. For fuller discussion, see Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 90–91, Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. I. The Early Period* (Leidn: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 35–36, and Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras. Geschichte – Gegenwart – Rituale* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002–4) 1: 95, 244, 323.

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> maggots boil up from the decay and putrefaction of his excrement and his body is eaten by them as they bore into his interior. For when it is clear the man is dead and the top trough is removed, they see the flesh has been eaten away, and there are swarms of such animals around his vital organs, eating them and leeching at them.[48]

A text like this poses difficult problems. If one accepts it whole, Artaxerxes & Co. were sadistic brutes; if one rejects it outright, Ctesias was a scurrilous fabulist with a truly vile imagination. Between these stark alternatives lies the possibility that Ctesias saw or heard about a practice of the sort he describes, whose motives and logic he understood imperfectly, and whose horrors he distorted and exaggerated.[49] Without external confirmation, such a construction remains hypothetical. To test it, I reviewed Achaemenian and Zoroastrian materials in search of evidence that might provide alternate understandings of what went on in the practice – or fantasy – of "the troughs."

A starting point for that inquiry is the fact that the Achaemenian inscriptions theorize the corruption introduced by the Lie as a condition simultaneously moral, physical and aesthetic, manifest above all in the reeking odor of corpses, excrement, and related forms of bodily rot. This finds expression in Old Persian *gastā* the abstract noun conventionally (and blandly) translated as "evil," but which is actually the passive participle of the verb **gant-*, **gandh-* "to smell badly, to stink."[50] This same association of ethical and olfactory codes is attested throughout the Iranian language family, including Avestan *ganti-* "stench" (that of demons, corpses, and a liar's post mortem soul),[51] Parthian *gnd'g* "stinking, reeking," alongside *gst* "disgusting, loathsome," Sogdian *γnt*

48 Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 16.2–4. Elsewhere, Ctesias tells that Aspamitres was also subjected to the troughs for his complicity in the murders of Xerxes and Dariaios (Fragment 14[34] in the numeration of Lenfant, *Ctésias*, pp. 128–29), but he provides no details and no other author mentions the practice.

49 Jacobs, "Grausame Hinrichtungen – friedliche Bilder," op cit., treats the episode of the troughs at pp. 124–27, and considers Ctesias's account plausible. Rollinger, "Extreme Gewalt und Strafgericht," pp. 612–13 and 619–22, sees Ctesias as having engaged in literary elaboration, consistent with the Greek association of bodily punishments with master-slave relations and the exercise of despotic power. Most skeptical of all is Binder, *Plutarchs Vita des Artaxerxes*, pp. 248–50.

50 The term is used most frequently in prayer formulae like that of DNa §5: "Wise Lord protect me from evil, also my house and this country" (*mām Auramazdā pātu hacā gastā utāmaį viϑam utā imām dahyāųm*). Its use increases abruptly during the reign of Artaxerxes II (A^2Sa, A^2Sd §2, A^2Ha §2).

51 Cf. *Vīdaēuudāt* 7.56 and *Hādōxt Nask* 2.25.

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"stench" alongside *γnt'k* and *γnt"q* "bad, evil," and Ossetic (Digor) *iǧæstæ* "desecration by something contagious or poisonous." Most significant of all is Pahlavi *gandag* "foul, stinking," alongside *gannāg* "foul, corrupt," which gives name to the source of all corruption: *Gannāg Mēnōg*, "Foul Spirit" (= *Ahriman*, "Evil Spirit"), Zoroastrian counterpart of "the Lie."[52]

This – plus the fact that the body of the convicted man was put on public display[53] – is the only point that finds correspondence in the royal inscriptions. Other comparanda can be located, however, in Herodotus and the Zoroastrian scriptures. I have discussed these materials in my book and elsewhere, and they can be summarized schematically (Table 7.2).[54]

These data led me to view Ctesias's description as something plausible and comprehensible within the range of the Iranian imaginary. Further, I suggested "the troughs" might be understood as a judiciary ordeal designed to demonstrate the guilt of the accused by constituting his bodily waste and the vermin it spawned as tangible evidence of the extent to which his inner being had been corrupted by the Lie and associated demons. That conclusion is based on a process of comparison, inference, and hypothesis that is open to challenge at numerous points. Some readers may well find the evidence inadequate to offset doubts about Ctesias as a source and that is a perfectly reasonable position. To dismiss Ctesias as utterly untrustworthy and to rule the Zoroastrian materials irrelevant *a priori* is another matter: an excessively defensive posture designed to guard against an extremely troubling question.

52 Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, op cit., pp. 103–4. See also Skjærvø, "Avestan Quotations in Old Persian?," pp. 40–41. In place of *gastā,* Akkadian versions of the inscriptions use *bīšu,* "1. malodorous; 2. of bad quality; 3. [morally] evil;" Elamite versions use *mišnaka* (alternate forms: *mišnuka, mušnuka*), "evil, trouble." In one instance (Persepolis Fortification Tablet 3300.13, cited by Hinz and Koch, *Elamisches Wörterbuch*, p. 960), the term appears to describe a leather hide that has become spoiled, foul, or rotten, but this interpretation is less than certain. See further, Ernst Herzfeld, *Altpersische Inschriften* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1938), pp. 173–77.

53 Cf. the display of the disfigured rebels Fravarti and Tritantaxma, described at DB §§32 and 33: "All the people/army saw him" (*haruvašim kāra avaiṇa*).

54 In addition to *Religion, Empire, and Torture*, pp. 83–96 and "An Ancient Case of Interrogation and Torture," op cit., see also "From Artaxerxes to Abu Ghraib," in Tore Ahlbäck, ed., *Exercising Power. The Role of Religions in Concord and Conflict* (Åbo, Finland: Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, 2006), pp. 213–241.

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TABLE 7.2 Details in Ctesias's description of "the troughs" and Iranian comparanda

	Ctesias's account of "the troughs"	Achaemenid inscriptions	Herodotus	Avesta	Pahlavi Texts
Evil associated with the stench of bodily corruption	+	+		+	+
Corruption theorized as caused by demonic forces that have penetrated the body	+			+	+
Flies and worms theorized as creatures of the Evil Spirit (or Lie), antithetical to the Wise Lord's creation	+		+	+	+
Milk and honey theorized as ideal foods, marked for their innocence	+			+	+
Excrement theorized as evidence of the corruption present in food and the body that digests it	+			+	+
Body of accused placed on public display	+	+	+		+

4

Although no one would regard Ctesias as an ideal historian and reliable source, his stock has risen slightly in recent decades.[55] Many ancients voiced sharp

55 Skepticism about Ctesias reached its height with Marco Dorati, "Ctesia falsario," *Quaderni di Storia* 41 (1995): 33–52, who argued that Ctesias's claim to have practiced medicine at the Persian court was itself a fiction, based on Herodotus's story of Democodes (3.129–38),

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criticism and modern scholars generally consider him a lightweight: a superficial observer, unreliable on chronology, weak on analysis, more interested in court gossip than serious matters of state.[56] His reputation hit bottom when Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg singled him out as having first introduced the idea of an "Orient" characterized by luxury, intrigue, cruelty, and effeminacy: a prejudicial construct that would haunt the European imaginary for millennia thereafter.[57]

Sancisi-Weerdenburg pronounced this judgment at the first meeting of the Achaemenid History Workshop, which initiated a paradigm shift from a (distorted and condescending) hellenocentric perspective to an iranocentric approach that promised comprehension of the empire on its own terms. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and her colleagues took considerable strides toward fulfilling that promise and the revision they accomplished is remarkable. Clearly, her opening salvo was necessary and helped free up the space in which novel styles of inquiry could emerge and thrive. In appreciative retrospect, however, one can recognize that Sancisi-Weerdenburg's point was polemically overstated and that increasingly routinized, reflexive, and strident overuse of the battle cry has blunted the critical edge that initially informed charges of "hellenocentrism."

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itself treated as a fiction by Alan Griffiths, "Democedes of Croton: A Greek Doctor at the Court of Darius," *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987): 37–51. Dorati advances some intriguing arguments and Maria Brosius, "Greeks at the Persian Court," in Wiesehöfer, et al, *Ktesias' Welt / Ctesias' World*, pp. 69–80, esp. pp. 77–78 has voiced similar doubts. Few modern scholars would go so far, however, and although ancient authors often criticized Ctesias's reporting, none challenged his claim to have spent years in the service of Artaxerxes II. Their criticisms, moreover, focused primarily on his accounts of India, Assyria, and the Greek-Persian wars, not the period of his royal service. That Xenophon cites Ctesias for information on the battle of Cunaxa (*Anabasis* 1.8.26–27) is particularly telling. On the significance of these citations, see Tuplin, "Ctesias as Military Historian," op cit., pp. 468–70.

56 Thus, most influentially, Felix Jacoby, "Ktesias," in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft,* ed. Georg Wissowa (Munich: Alfred Druckenmüller, 1922) 11: 2032–73 and Arnaldo Momigliano, "Tradizione e invenzione in Ctesia," *Atene e Roma* 12 (1931): 15–44, reprinted in *Quarto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969), pp. 181–212.

57 Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Decadence in the Empire or Decadence in the Sources? From Source to Synthesis: Ctesias," in Sancisi-Weerdenburg, ed., *Achaemenid History. I Sources, Structures and Synthesis: Proceedings of the Groningen 1983 Achaemenid History Workshop* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1987), esp. pp. 43–44. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), published five years before the Groningen meetings, is not cited directly, but its influence is strongly felt. For a recent reaffirmation of this position, see Pierre Briant, "Orientaliser l'Orient, ou: d'un orientalisme à l'autre," in Wiesehöfer, et al., *Ktesias' Welt / Ctesias' World*, pp, 507–13.

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Lost in the process is the possibility of a nuanced reading that attempts to distinguish, as Pierre Briant carefully put it, between "le noyau informative achéménide" and "l'interpretation grecque" in the Ctesian fragments.[58] Several authors have recently made such efforts, presumably to Colburn's dismay.[59] Staunch in his loyalty to Sancisi-Weerdenburg, the Achaemenid History project, and Edward Said's model of Orientalism, Colburn transforms a once-necessary intervention into a rigid orthodoxy that guards against the dialectic progress of historic research. For just as the rejection of Ctesias – and all he was made to represent – facilitated the advances of the Achaemenid History group, so these same advances make it possible to reconsider Greek authors in ways that rub against the grain of *both* Eurocentric triumphalism *and* Achaemenian idealized self-representations. Indeed, one might now entertain the idea that something like a premodern postcolonialism inspired the genre of history introduced by the Ionians of Halicarnassus and Cnidus, who had sufficient experience of Persian domination to develop a critical perspective at the same time that it led them to misapprehend, distort, and exaggerate certain aspects of the imperial power they resented.

Ultimately, my chief concern is not to chart, nor redirect the course of Achaemenid Studies.[60] Indeed, as Colburn recognizes, the primary object of

58 Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse*, p. 16, speaking of Ctesias, Xenophon, and other authors of *Persika*.

59 Specifically regarding Ctesias, the most important works are Dominique Lenfant, "Ctésias et Hérodote, ou les réécritures de l'histoire," *Révue des études grecques* 109 (1996): 348–80, eadem, "La « Décadence » du grand roi et les ambitions de Cyrus le Jeune: Aux souces perses d'un mythe occidental?," *Revue des études grecques* 114 (2001): 407–38, eadem, *Ctésias de Cnide*, op cit., Bassett, "The Death of Cyrus the Younger," op cit., Christopher Tuplin, "Doctoring the Persians: Ctesias of Cnidus, Physician and Historian," *Klio* 86 (2004): 305–47, Jan P. Stronk, "Ctesias of Cnidus, a Reappraisal," *Mnemosyne* 60 (2007): 25–58, idem, *Ctesias' Persian History* (Düsseldorf: Wellem Verlag, 2010), pp. 51–54, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and James Robson, *Ctesias's History of Persia: Tales of the Orient* (London: Routledge, 2010), esp. pp. 22–36 and 80–87, Janick Auberger, "Que reste-t-il de l'homme de science?," in Wiesehöfer, et al, *Ktesias' Welt / Ctesias' World*, pp. 13–20, eadem, "Ctésias et l'Orient. Un original doué de raison," *Topoi* 5 (1995): 337–52, Klaus Karttunen, "Ctesias in Transmission and Tradition," *Topoi* 7 (1997): 635–46, John R. Gardiner-Garden, *Ktesias on Early Central Asian History and Ethnography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1987), and Takuji Abe, "The Two Orients for Greek Writers," *Kyoto Journal of Ancient History* 11 (2011): 1–14.

60 Broad reflections on the state of the field have recently been offered by Thomas Harrison, *Writing Ancient Persia* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), who is fairly critical of the Achaemenid History Workshop's obsession with hellenocentrism and T.C. McCaskie, "'As on a Darkling Plain': Practitioners, Publics, Propagandists, and Ancient Historiography," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54 (2012): 145–73, who is more appreciative and generous, although with some critical moments.

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my interest is not the Achaemenians *per se* and he understands that I speak of the past for explicit reasons of the present. He is mistaken, however, in thinking that my treatment of ancient Persia is a shadow play, while the "real point" lies elsewhere. Thus, he confidently asserts: "As Lincoln himself admits, his book is really about recent American activities in Iraq. The extended discussion of the Achaemenid Empire is only meant to be a lengthy ancient case study that illustrates Lincoln's real point, which is the subject of the postscript on Abu Ghraib."[61]

Colburn's error here is formally identical to that which he made *a propos* of Achaemenians and Zoroastrians, i.e. he mistakes a mediated triadic relation for a unidirectional binary. Thus, although I do discuss both the Achaemenid empire and American actions in Iraq, it is not the case that my "real" interest is the latter, for which the former serves as stalking horse. Rather, although I am serious – and scrupulous – about both the examples I treat, my prime interest is in a third, more abstract entity, through which these two are connected: the general category of empire. Or, more precisely, the question of religion and empire.[62]

Torture was not initially part of my agenda and the first version of my manuscript, which I completed in early 2004, lacked the chapter on "the troughs" and the appendix on Abu Ghraib. At that point, my central concern – prompted by American rhetoric in the "War on Terror" – was to identify the styles of religious ideology that have most often helped animate and legitimate imperial ambitions. Achaemenid Persia provided a test case and close reading of the royal inscriptions (along with supporting evidence from Herodotus and the Zoroastrian scriptures) let me identify three constructs that recur in other empires. These are: 1) a dualistic ethics in which the opposition good/evil is aligned with an ethnic (or national) contrast of self and other; 2) a theory of charismatic election that represents the ruler as a deity's chosen instrument for accomplishing the divine purpose; 3) a sense of soteriological mission that calls on the imperial power to save other peoples, by conquest if necessary.[63]

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61 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenid Empire," p. 102, with reference to Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Torture*, p. 97.

62 As I announce in my book's opening passage: "This book is concerned with two timely topics: religion and empire. More precisely, it explores the contribution of religious discourse, practice, imagination, and desire to emergent imperial ambitions." Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Torture*, p. xi. The discussion that follows (pp. xi–xiii) describes my reasons for choosing Achaemenid Persia as an example through which these issues can be pursued and the contemporary concerns that prompted the inquiry. On the very page Colburn cites in his attempt to unmask my "real point," one reads something quite different: "the topic that concerns me most broadly is that of empire in general" (p. 97).

63 Lincoln, *Religion, Empire, and Terror*, p. 95.

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It is thus hardly the case that Abu Ghraib was the "real point" of my book, but neither was it an idle afterthought. Rather, reports of American conduct in Iraq, controversies around "enhanced interrogation" techniques, and the shocking photographs first published in May 2004 led me to think it was not enough to explain how certain kinds of religious commitments and discourse can serve to inspire imperial undertakings. One also wanted to know how the foot soldiers of empire react when obliged to do things that contradict the ideals they believe they are defending. It was this that led me to reflect on "the troughs" and to expand my book by two chapters.

By associating "the troughs" with the events of Abu Ghraib, I hoped to make clear that such atrocities are not limited to Asian, ancient, or particularly thuggish peoples. Rather, I take them as a product and diagnostic sign of empire in general, for which one could readily cite Roman, Spanish, Soviet, British, Chinese and Aztec examples. At the end of the day, I am led to conclude that the exercise of imperial power, which involves such processes as conquest, domination, and extraction, is morally exhausting. Religious motivation and justification may help in the short term, but ultimately exacerbate the problem, producing unsustainable contradictions between the rough deeds and lofty principles equally necessary to the project of empire. This is not the standard model of "(Oriental) decadence" in which rulers get fat, corrupt, jaded, and lazy, but neither is it the narrative favored by participants in the Achaemenid History Workshop, in which the Achaemenians were noble and strong until, quite suddenly, they weren't. I can understand why someone committed to such a view would feel threatened by Ctesias's story of the troughs and my reading of it.

5

Were the debate simply about the likelihood of religious influence, the admissibility of certain sources, or the reliability of specific testimonies, the tone of Colburn's polemic and the level of his outrage would be hard to understand. The heart of the matter lies elsewhere, specifically in his sense that "(Lincoln) recognizes explicitly the bias inherent in many of the Greek sources, yet he ends up reproducing that same bias himself."[64] As is well known, that bias, which Colburn terms a "proto-Orientalism," has interacted with the full-blown Orientalism of more recent centuries to provide European imperialism, colonialism, and ethnocentrism with their rationalization and legitimation. All

64 Colburn, "Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and the Achaemenids," p. 97.

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of this Colburn takes me to be renewing and reasserting, although he is kind enough to think I do this paradoxically and unwittingly.[65]

These are, indeed, grievous sins and I appreciate the zeal with which Colburn rises to denounce them. In the immediate instance, however, I fear his indignation is misdirected. Thus, in the familiar genealogy he rehearses, western scholars habitually conflated Euro-American imperialisms with those of Greece and Rome, and construed this in opposition to the earlier empires of Asia (Achaemenid, Han, Ottoman, Moghul, et al.), coding the "Western" set as civilized and civilizing, the "Oriental" as barbaric, sadistic, effete, and worse.[66] In contrast, the goal of the comparison I entertained was to assert the *commonality* of American and Achaemenian imperial ideologies, practices, accomplishments, and excesses. More specifically, the explicit juxtaposition of Abu Ghraib and "the troughs" (to which Athenian conduct at Melos could easily be added) was hardly meant to privilege West over East, but to suggest that empires of any century and continent are capable of atrocious behavior and that such atrocities merit careful, non-defensive consideration because they arise from, reflect, and reveal deep structural contradictions inherent to the imperial project as such.

I understand that Colburn is acutely sensitive to any whiff of "Orientalism," and my willingness to entertain Ctesias's account of "the troughs" triggered his reaction. He is wrong, however, in believing that "(Lincoln) makes the Achaemenids out to be oriental savages whose religious ideology contributed to their savagery."[67] Rather, I make them out to be rulers – like many others – whose religious ideology contributed more powerfully than is usually recognized to their management of empire and to their empire's inevitable contradictions.

65 Ibid., p. 98.
66 Ibid., pp. 94–97.
67 Ibid., p. 98.

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CHAPTER 8

Persian Archers and Paradise Gardens: Projecting Power in the Achaemenid Empire

0.1 It is hard to imagine any empire, for that matter any city or state not employing some mix of hard and soft power, i.e. force and the threat thereof as opposed to persuasion, seduction, and temptation in pursuing its goals.[1] Just as those goals vary widely, not only from case to case, but also with historic dynamics and vicissitudes, so too do the precise forms of hard and soft power that may be employed, as well as the relation and balance between them. In the following discussion, I will consider three kinds of power employed by the Achaemenid empire from the time of its creation by Cyrus the Great (r. 558–530 BCE), through its period of rapid territorial expansion that continued with Cambyses (r. 530–522) and Darius (r. 522–486), and the relative stability that prevailed from Xerxes (r. 486–465) until the empire fell to Alexander of Macedon (330 BCE). As I hope to show, over the course of these centuries, the empire reacted to shifting circumstances, refining the different kinds of power it developed and deployed, with results that may be instructive.

1 Military Pressure

1.1 Aeschylus's tragedy *The Persians* tells the story of a great empire's surprising inability to conquer a distant, smaller, and seemingly weaker foe. First produced in 472 BCE, shortly after Xerxes' failed invasion of Greece, all the play's action takes place at the Achaemenid court, where elders and nobles show initial anxiety, then react with grief and horror to reports of the crushing defeat suffered at Salamis (480) and premonitions of the one yet to come at Plataea (479).[2] Consistent with Greek notions of obscenity, the play never depicts battles and bloodshed directly. These are presaged in dreams, described by

1 This chapter was originally presented at a conference on "Cultural Imperialism and Soft Power" held in Beijing, October 7–9, 2016, later published in *Studi Iranici Ravennati* III (2019): 81–104.

2 The play's action unfolds on the day that news of the naval defeat at Salamis makes its way to the Persian court, narrated in gruesome detail by a messenger (ll. 353–432). At that moment, the army's disaster at Plataea had not yet occurred, but is prophesied by Darius's ghost (ll. 813–20).

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messengers, lamented by the court, chorus, and ghostly apparitions, but never represented on stage. Indeed, the violent encounter of Europe and Asia – which Herodotus subsequently construed as the climax of world history and which later generations treated as the foundation myth of western supremacy – was depicted largely via patterns of poetic imagery.[3]

The play deploys a number of binary oppositions, some more prejudicial and some less, to develop its contrast of East and West. Prominent among these are the opposition of day and night;[4] light and darkness;[5] silver and gold;[6] battle cries and lamentations;[7] the yoke of slavery vs. unfettered freedom;[8] wild

3 While earlier generations emphasized Aeschylus's generosity toward the defeated Persians and his respect for their innate humanity, in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), critics like Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Cultivation through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 76–100, Pericles Georges, *Barbarian Asia and the Greek Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 76–114, Birgen Hutzfeldt, *Das Bild der Perser in der griechischen Dichtung des 5. Vorchristlichen Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999), pp. 62–69 emphasized the disparaging sense of alterity cultivated in the text's discourse. For more recent attempts to reconcile these positions, see Thomas Harrison, *The Emptiness of Asia: Aeschylus' « Persians » and the History of the Fifth Century* (London: Duckworth, 2000) and Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 9–21. On the various patterns of imagery, see H.G. Edinger, *Vocabulary and Imagery in Aeschylus' Persians* (Princeton: Princeton University Ph.D. Dissertation, 1961), Barbara Hughes Fowler, "Aeschylus' Imagery," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 28 (1967): 1–74, esp. pp. 1–10, M. Anderson, "The Imagery of the *Persians*," *Greece and Rome* 19 (1972): 166–74.

4 Night is regularly the time of the Persians, sometimes a time of false confidence (ll. 353–94, 495–507), sometimes the period when their illusions of power yield to the Greek power that becomes clear with daybreak (ll. 176, 518–19). In another variation on the theme, darkness is described as the proper realm of the deceased King Darius, who is recalled to the light only in order to explain the significance of the Greek victories (ll. 839).

5 At lines 167–70, Queen Atossa associates the loss of Persia's men and the absence of its king to the loss of light (cf. 300–301, where Xerxes' return to Susa is associated with the light of day, his time in Europe with darkest night). The Persian ships are described as "dark-eyed" (line 559: *kyanōpides*) and at line 81 the light of the Persian king's eyes is itself said to be dark (*kuaneon d' ommasi leussōn*).

6 Persians are repeatedly identified with gold, with insinuations of luxury, decadence, and corruption (ll. 3, 9, 45, 53, 79–80, 159). Indeed, their royal line is said to have been "born from gold" (*khrysogonos*), with reference to the myth of Perseus's conception. Greek wealth is lesser and less morally tainted, consisting only of silver (238).

7 Greek war cries figure at ll. 386–94, 401–5, 462, associated with daybreak and inflicting terror on the Persians; Persian mourning and lamentation figure prominently at ll. 120–25, 285, 295, 332, 511–12, 536–47, 571, 686, 697, 727, 896, 935–77, and 1038–76.

8 At line 50, the Persians are described as wishing "to cast the yoke of slavery over Greece" (*zygon amphibalein doulion Helladi*). The image recurs in Atossa's dream, where Xerxes attempts to yoke two women who represent Europe and Asia (ll. 181–99), and in the bridge over the Hellespont by which Xerxes joined the two continents (ll. 72, 130, 722, 745–48). By

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stallions vs. docile mares;[9] the warm and moist vs. the cold and dry,[10] frightened eagles vs. predatory falcons.[11] No imagery figures more prominently, however, nor does more ideological work than the association of Persians with archery and Greeks with the spear, which is introduced early in the text.

> The impetuous chief of people-rich Asia …
> leads a war that subdues *by means of the bow*
> against men *famed for their spears.*[12]

Although infantry formed the numerical bulk of the Achaemenid army, their use of archers was so extensive and distinctive that Aeschylus uses them to represent the entirety of Persian military power.[13] His picture of Greek forces

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contrast, the Greeks are the slaves of no man (l. 242: *outinos douloi*) and an emphatic call for freedom becomes their battle cry when fighting at Salamis begins (ll. 403–5: *eleutheroute patrid', eleutheroute de / paidas, gynaikas, theōn te patrōōn edē / thēkas te progonōn*). For their part, the Persian elders voice their hope that Asians will enjoy freedom once "the yoke of power" has been broken (l. 594: *hōs elythe zygon alkās*).

9 The two women who represent Europe and Asia in Atossa's dream gradually morph into horses of radically different nature (ll. 189–96), one wild and implicitly male, the other utterly domesticated, with a "soft mouth [a phrase with erotic, as well as equine associations], easily governed by the reins" (l. 193: *en hēniaisi t' eikhen euarkton stoma*).

10 The fullest development of this theme is in the contrast of the ice that sustains the life of Persians during their retreat across the Strymon and the water in which they drown when the sun rises (ll. 492–507). See further Bruce Lincoln, "Death By Water: Strange Events at the Strymon and the Categorical Opposition of East and West," *Classical Philology* 95 (2000): 12–20, reprinted in idem, *"Happiness for Mankind": Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), pp. 324–34.

11 ll. 205–10.

12 Aeschylus, *Persians*, lines 74–86:
πολυάνδρου δ' Ἀσίας θούριος ἄρχων …
ἐπάγει **δουρικλύτοις** ἀν –
δράσι **τοξόδαμνον** Ἄρη.

13 On the composition of the Persian military, see Nicholas Sekunda, *The Persian Army 560–330 B.C.* (London: Osprey, 1992), Duncan Head, *The Achaemenid Persian Army* (Stockport, Montvert, 1992), Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter Daniels (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002), pp. 195–99, 795–800, and Nigel Tallis, "The Achaemenid Army in a Near Eastern Context," in Curtis and St. John Simpson, eds., *The World of Achaemenid Persia: History, Art and Society in Iran and the Ancient Near East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 309–14. The army is described as having been divided between archers and horsemen at lines 25–27, archers and sailors at 53–54. Persians are consistently associated with the bow (ll. 26, 54, 85, 147, 278, 556, and 926), but the only Persian depicted with a spear is the otherwise unknown Amphitreus (l. 320–21).Other Greek authors acknowledged Persian use of the spear, encoding their own military (and phallic) superiority through the assertion that Greek spears were longer. Inter alia, see Herodotus 5.49, 7.211, and Xenophon, *Horsemanship* 9.1.11.

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is precisely the reverse: no archers, only armored hoplites equipped with heavy spears (*doru*, *logkhē*, and *enkhos*).[14]

> Atossa: Are the bow and arrow common in the Greeks' hands?
> Chorus: Not at all. They use stately spears and protective armor.[15]

The effect is to make the outcome of battle, indeed the course of history, seem to hinge on the weaponry favored by the warring nations. As the chorus anxiously puts the question:

> Does pulling the bow conquer –
> or has the strength of the sharp-tipped
> spear prevailed?[16]

The answer is unequivocal. As the messenger from Salamis relates: "*Our bows were useless* and all the army was destroyed."[17] Similarly, the ghost of Darius laments: "Has the whole army been destroyed *by the spear?*[18] And he prophesies further disasters to be wrought by the same weapon.

> So much blood-clotted gore
> will be spilled on the ground of Plataea *by the Greek spear*
> that some of the dead will be a silent sign
> to the eyes of mortals unto the third generation.[19]

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14 Aeschylus, *Persians*, lines 85, 148–49, 240, 729, and 817.

15 Ibid., lines 239–40:
Ατ. πότερα γὰρ τοξουλκὸς αἰχμὴ διὰ χερῶν αὐτος πρέπει;
Χο. οὐδαμῶς· ἔγχη σταδαῖα καὶ φεράσπιδες σαγαί.

16 *Persians*, ll. 147–49: πότερον τόξον ῥῦμα τὸ νικῶν,
ἢ δορικράνου
λόγχης ἰσχὺς κεκράτηκεν.

17 *Persians* 278–79: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἤρκει τόξα, πᾶς δ' ἀπώλλυτο / στρατὸς.

18 Ibid., l. 729: ὧδε παμπήδην δὲ λαὸς πᾶς κατέφθαρται δορί;

19 Ibid., ll. 816–20: τόσος γὰρ ἔσται πέλανος αἱματοσφαγὴς
πρὸς γῇ Πλαταιῶν **Δωρίδος λόγχης** ὕπο·
θῖνες νεκρῶν δὲ καὶ τριτοσπόρῳ γονῇ
ἄφωνα σημανοῦσιν ὄμμασιν βροτῶν.
For its part, the Chorus takes the disaster to demonstrate and result from the inadequacy of the archer, rather than the superiority of the spearman.
The earth bewails its native
Youths, killed for Xerxes, who crams
Hades full of Persians.
For many fellows, the flower of our land,

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When the defeated Xerxes finally appears on stage, having made his way back to Susa, he stands in rags, bereft of arms, save for a near-empty quiver, the final image through which the play dramatizes the inadequacy of the Persians' favored weapon.[20]

Typically, the advantage archers enjoy is their ability to strike from afar without risk to themselves, toward which end archery employs technology, precision, and cunning. In all these ways, the bow represents a "softer" type of military power than the hoplite warfare practiced by Greeks, in which phalanxes of heavily armored spear-bearing soldiers relied on their courage and strength, confronted their enemies directly, exposed themselves to danger, and observed at close hand the carnage their weapons produced. Persians may have considered their own style of warfare technologically advanced, tactically sophisticated, and certain to prevail. Speaking for Greeks in general, Aeschylus judged it cowardly and ineffective.[21] The argument continues today between the enthusiasts of drones and those who favor "boots on the ground."

2 Economic Inducements

2.1 Military action having failed, the Achaemenids developed another means to project power in subsequent decades that reconceived the use they made of archers. To appreciate its nature, one needs to know that until relatively late the Persians minted no coinage and even thereafter conducted many core economic operations in non-monetary fashion. Tribute, for instance, was always paid in kind or in equivalent weights of silver, but never with the large gold coins of exceptional purity known as Darics, the first type of which

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Warriors who subdued by the bow, a full myriad
Of our men has been utterly consumed (ll. 922–27).
γᾶ δ' αἰάξει τὰν ἐγγαίαν
ἥβαν Ξέρξᾳ κταμέναν Ἄιδου
σάκτορι Περσᾶν· γὰρ
πολλοὶ φῶτες, χώρας ἄνθος,
τοξοδάμαντες, πάνυ ταρφύς τις
μυριὰς ἀνδρῶν, ἐξέφθινται.

20 *Persians*, ll. 1017–23. On the abject nature of Xerxes when he first appears on stage, see Phillip Mitsis, "Xerxes' Entrance: Irony, Myth, and History in the *Persians*," in *Essays in Honor of G.M. Kirkwood* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 103–19.

21 On the contrast of hoplites and archers in other Greek literature, see Mauro Moggi, "L'oplita e l'arciere: ideologia e realtà tra guerra antica e guerra moderna," *Ktema* 27 (2002): 195–206.

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was introduced in very limited numbers around 500 BCE.[22] Three subsequent types were issued in much greater numbers from about 480 until the end of the empire, apparently reflecting a decision to develop and deploy a softer form of power after the failed invasions of Greece.[23] Minted only at Sardis, darics did not circulate much among Persians or in the east, being used mostly in dealings with Greeks, Lydians, and a few other peoples accustomed to coinage. Although mercenary soldiers and other recipients might understand the darics they received as "payments," those who bestowed these precious coins theorized them differently. Neither the standard means of exchange, nor a universal measure of value, darics figured in transactions highlighting the extraordinary generosity Achaemenid ideology attributed to the King.[24]

Typically, Persians construed such prestations as spontaneous expressions of the King's inherent benevolence, although certain details contradict that ideal.[25] In the first place, the King did not give freely of his wealth, but redis-

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22 Herodotus 3.89–97 describes the tribute system in detail, apparently based on Achaemenid administrative records, on which see the essays included in Pierre Briant and Clarisse Herrenschmidt, eds., *Le tribut dans l'empire perse* (Paris: Peeters, 1989), Raymond Descat, "Mnésimachos, Hérodote et le système tributaire achéménide," *Revue des Études Anciennes* 87 (1985): 97–112, and Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, pp. 388–421. At 4.166, Herodotus comments on the extraordinary purity of the darics, reflecting Darius's desire "to leave a memorial of himself such as had been made by and for no other king" (πυθόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἰδὼν Δαρεῖον ἐπιθυμέοντα μνημόσυνον ἑωυτοῦ λιπέσθαι τοῦτο τὸ μὴ ἄλλῳ εἴη βασιλέι κατεργασμένον).

23 Regarding the form and use of Persian darics, see, inter alia, Ian Carradice, "The Regal Coinage of the Persian Empire," in Ian Carradice, ed., *Coinage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1987), pp. 73–108, Margaret Cool Root, "The Persian archer at Persepolis: Aspects of chronology, style and symbolism," *Revue des études anciennes* 91 (1989): 33–50, David Stronach, "Early Achaemenid Coinage: Perspectives from the Homeland," *Iranica Antiqua* 24 (1989): 255–79, P. Vargyas, "Darius I and the Daric reconsidered," *Iranica Antiqua* 35 (2000): 33–46, C.L. Nimchuk, "The 'Archers' of Darius: Coinage or tokens of royal esteem?," *Ars Orientalis* 32 (2002): 55–79, and Mark Garrison, "Archers at Persepolis: The Emergence of Royal Ideology at the Heart of the Empire," in John Curtis and Simpson, eds., *The World of Achaemenid Persia*, pp. 337–60.

24 On the ideology of royal generosity and its role within a redistributive economy, see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, pp. 302–23.

25 The source that gives fullest explication of the way royal generosity was theorized is Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.2.7–23, culminating in the statement attributed to Cyrus the Great (8.2.2122):

> I serve the gods and always grasp after more. And when I have obtained what I can see is more than sufficient for me, I take care of my friends' needs. By enriching men and being their benefactor, I procure their friendship and good disposition, and from them I reap the fruit of protection against danger and a good reputation.
>
> ἐγὼ δ' ὑπηρετῶ μὲν τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ὀρέγομαι ἀεὶ πλειόνων· ἐπειδὰν δὲ κτήσωμαι, ἃ ἄν ἴδω περιττὰ ὄντα τῶν ἐμοὶ ἀρκούντων, τούτοις τάς τ' ἐνδείας τῶν φίλων ἐξακοῦμαι καὶ πλουτίζων

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tributed (better: reinvested) a portion of the income he extracted as tribute from subjects and booty from enemies. Second, his gifts were not disinterested, without expectation of reciprocity, but part of exchanges in which material wealth of a spectacular sort moved against diffuse non-material benefits. The value of the latter being hard to recognize or calculate, it might appear less than the King's offerings, while actually possessing greater long-term value. For in these transactions, gold darics (also jewels, robes, and other prestige items) not only rewarded loyalty and past service, but secured their indefinite continuation, insofar as the King's "magnanimous" gifts were experienced as a debt one could never repay. Publicizing stories of the King's largesse further compounded the return on his investment, burnishing his image and stimulating others' desire to serve him.

Third, the flow of darics was unidirectional, since giving them was a prerogative of the superior party in an asymmetric relation. One who received darics from the King – a satrap, for instance, or commander of mercenaries – might circulate them to others whom he wished to reward, honor, recruit, and bind to himself, but never could the coins pass back up the chain. To attempt this would turn the sociopolitical, economic, and moral order topsy-turvy, for darics were instruments of subordination, not freely circulating currency.

2.2 An episode recounted by Herodotus is particularly revealing. Along their march to Greece, Xerxes' troops passed through Lydia, where they were fed and entertained by Pythios, son of Atys.[26] Given the army's vast size, the expense was huge, but Pythios could afford it, being the world's richest man, save for the King himself. His monetary holdings totaled 2000 talents in silver and 3,993,000 gold darics, all of which Pythios offered to Xerxes in support of the coming war. Acknowledging the unprecedented nature of the Lydian's offer, Xerxes refused what he carefully characterized as a "contribution," and not a gift.

> Delighted by what Pythios said, Xerxes replied: "My Lydian guest-friend, since I left Persian territory, I have encountered no man who was willing to provide hospitality for my army, nor who came before me and proclaimed himself willing to contribute (*symballesthai*) money for my war,

καὶ εὐεργετῶν ἀνθρώπους εὔνοιαν ἐξ αὐτῶν κτῶμαι καὶ φιλίαν, καὶ ἐκ τούτων καρποῦμαι ἀσφάλειαν καὶ εὔκλειαν·

26 Sian Lewis, "Who is Pythius the Lydian?," *Histos* 2 (1998): 185–91 suggests that Herodotus subtly identifies this Pythios as the grandson of Croesus, last king of Lydia, which could explain his great wealth and relation of guest-friendship (*xeinia*) to the Persian King. Whether this was a historic figure or a stock narrative character, the details of this episode are surely exaggerated, perhaps invented, to make an ideological point.

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> save you. You hosted my army wonderfully and you offered much money. To you I give (*didōmi*) these honor-gifts (*gerea*) of my own. I make you my guest-friend and I will fill out your four million darics myself, giving you the seven thousand you lack, so you reach the even number by my doing. Keep for yourself all you have acquired and know it will always be like this."[27]

Whether invented or based on an event subsequently embellished in its narration, this story underscores an ideologically significant point. The Persian King does not accept "gifts," no matter how large or potentially useful, for to do so would imply he was bound by obligations of reciprocity. As the story makes clear, the darics Xerxes bestowed on Pythios were not meant to be understood as part of an exchange, nor as payment for service. Rather, this was construed as the King's autonomous and spontaneous response to someone whose ideal qualities (loyalty, selflessness, devotion, etc.) he wished to recognize and encourage. As such, darics could be given to anyone the King wished to honor and cultivate, particularly foreigners who showed themselves willing and eager to serve him.

2.3 Thus, ambassadors to the Achaemenid court were frequently given darics, as were select Spartans, Athenians, Thebans, Argives, and others whom the King took as (or wished to make) his "friends."[28] In such transactions, darics became a common instrument of foreign policy, although one that often sparked suspicion and controversy. In contrast to the Persian understanding of darics as "gifts" that expressed royal benevolence and secured lasting friendship, most Greeks considered them "bribes" designed to seduce and corrupt. Both of these rival constructions express partial and complementary truths,

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27 Herodotus 7.27–29: Ξέρξης δὲ ἡσθεὶς τοῖσι εἰρημένοισι εἶπε "Ξεῖνε Λυδέ, ἐγὼ ἐπείτε ἐξῆλθον τὴν Περσίδα χώρην, οὐδενὶ ἀνδρὶ συνέμιξα ἐς τόδε ὅστις ἠθέλησε ξείνια προθεῖναι στρατῷ τῷ ἐμῷ, οὐδὲ ὅστις ἐς ὄψιν τὴν ἐμὴν καταστὰς αὐτεπάγγελτος ἐς τὸν πόλεμον ἐμοὶ ἠθέλησε συμβαλέσθαι χρήματα, ἔξω σεῦ. σὺ δὲ καὶ ἐξείνισας μεγάλως στρατὸν τὸν ἐμὸν καὶ χρήματα μεγάλα ἐπαγγέλλεαι. σοὶ ὦν ἐγὼ ἀντὶ αὐτῶν γέρεα τοιάδε δίδωμι· ξεῖνόν τέ σε ποιεῦμαι ἐμὸν καὶ τὰς τετρακοσίας μυριάδας τοι τῶν στατήρων ἀποπλήσω παρ᾽ ἐμεωυτοῦ δοὺς τὰς ἑπτὰ χιλιάδας, ἵνα μή τοι ἐπιδεέες ἔωσι αἱ τετρακόσιαι μυριάδες ἑπτὰ χιλιάδων, ἀλλὰ ᾖ τοι ἀπαρτιλογίη ὑπ᾽ ἐμέο πεπληρωμένη. ἔκτησό τε αὐτὸς τά περ αὐτὸς ἐκτήσαο, ἐπίστασό τε εἶναι αἰεὶ τοιοῦτος. Herodotus's continuation of the narrative at 7.38–40 reemphasizes the point that the King acts out of largesse, not reciprocity or obligation.

28 Gifts of darics to ambassadors are mentioned by Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 30.5–7 and Aelian, *Varia Historia* 1.22. David M. Lewis, "Persian Gold in Greek International Relations," *Revue des études anciennes* 91 (1989): 228–30 suggests that these gifts were a routine part of royal hospitality within the context of a gift economy. Most broadly, see S. Perlman, "On Bribing Athenian Ambassadors," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 17 (1976): 223–33.

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FIGURE 8.1 Achaemenid daric, Type I (circa 505–480 BCE). Sardis mint, 14 mm. diameter, 5.40 grams

reflecting the perspective and self-interest of those who held them. Together, but not separately, the euphemizing ideal and the contemptuous critique capture the subtleties of an ambiguous practice, best understood as an exercise of soft power. Through their use of darics, Achaemenid rulers sought to achieve what their archers had not always managed to accomplish: striking at a distance while exposing themselves to little risk and overcoming foreigners, whom they transformed from potential enemies into willing collaborators, grateful subjects, and loyal subordinates. Appropriately enough, the design of the daric showed it to be an instrument of soft power that drew on, extended, interacted with, alluded to, and in many transactions served to replace exercises of harder Achaemenid power, for the face of each coin bore an image of the Persian King (note the crown) as an archer.[29] In the earliest issues, he is armed with the bow alone (Figures 8.1 and 8.2), in later ones, he holds a spear as well as a bow (Figure 8.3), and later still a dagger replaces the spear as the hard complement to his soft power (Figure 8.4).

2.4 As one might expect, Persian use of darics to gain influence abroad met with a mixed response. Some foreigners happily accepted royal largesse and worked on the King's behalf.[30] Others hesitated, like Socrates, who reportedly observed that although he would value the King's friendship, he was not

29 The King also holds a bow in the relief sculptures at Bisitun and Naqš-i Rustam, as well as numerous cylinder seals.

30 Herodotus 7.106, Thucydides 8.28, Diodorus Siculus 13.104.6, Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 30.5.

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FIGURE 8.2 Achaemenid daric, Type II (circa 505–450 BCE). Sardis mint, 14 mm diameter, 8.32 grams

FIGURE 8.3 Achaemenid daric, Type III (circa 480–375 BCE), Sardis mint, 17 mm diameter, 8.30 grams

desirous of darics[31] or Cimon, who pronounced himself willing to be a friend (*philos*) of Persians, but not their hired help (*misthōtos*).[32] Often enough,

31 Plutarch, *On Brotherly Love* 486e: ὁ μὲν γὰρ Σωκράτης ἔλεγε βούλεσθαι Δαρεῖον ἔχειν μᾶλλον φίλον ἢ τὸ δαρεικόν, ἀδελφῷ.

32 Plutarch, *Cimon* 10.9: πότερον αἱρεῖται Κίμωνα μισθωτὸν ἢ φίλον ἔχειν, in response to an offer of Persian darics (10.8).

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FIGURE 8.4 Achaemenid daric, Type IV (circa 380–330 BCE), Sardis mint, 16 mm. diameter, 8.31 grams

the offer of darics was refused, while those who accepted the coins – also those rumored or suspected of doing so – were exposed to condemnation[33] and ridicule.[34]

The case of the Spartan King Agesilaos is revealing in several ways. From 397–94, his troops campaigned in Asia, liberating several Ionian cities from Achaemenid rule, although Persian delaying tactics kept him from major centers until Artaxerxes II (r. 404–359) succeeded in using his wealth and influence to persuade a coalition of other Greek cities to launch an attack on Sparta. Called home to defend his people, a frustrated Agesilaos quipped "he was being chased out of Asia by thirty thousand of the King's archers, for Persian coinage has the archer as its distinguishing mark."[35]

A multifaceted conflict continued for years, as the Persians used their treasury, their diplomacy, and their fleet to intervene decisively whenever one city threatened to gain the upper hand. Finally, mixing threats with "generous gifts" to compliant ambassadors, Artaxerxes imposed what became known as "the King's Peace" in 386, which secured Persian control of Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean, forbade further coalitions among the Greek cities, and checked

33 Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 30.6.

34 Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 601–5, *Acharnians* 98–104.

35 Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 20.4: τρισμυρίοις τοξόταις ἐξελαύνοιτο τῆς Ἀσίας ὑπὸ βασιλέως· τὸ γὰρ Περσικὸν νόμισμα τοξότην ἐπισημον εἶχεν. Cf. *Agesilaos* 15.1. For a convenient overview of the complex background to Agesilaos's campaign in Asia, see Jan P. Stronk, "Sparta and Persia: 412–386, An Outline," *Talanta* 22–23 (1990–91): 117–36 or Charles D. Hamilton, "Lysander, Agesilaus, Spartan Imperialism and the Greeks of Asia Minor," *Ancient World* 23 (1992): 35–50.

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both Spartan and Athenian ambitions.[36] As M.A. Dandamaev put it: "Once again, Persian gold proved stronger than Greek weapons."[37]

3 Symbolic Displays and Discursive Persuasion

3.1 Achaemenid rulers also deployed a third form of soft power, less aggressive, less materially based, less obvious, and less offensive than either arrows or darics. This was the discourse they broadcast, through which they sought to persuade others to become their allies, subordinates or, at the very least, to be impressed by the Persians and well disposed toward them. Detailed consideration of such discourse is the topic for a book, not the tail end of an essay, but one can distinguish three chief types based on their chronology and content.[38]

First were the communications through which Cyrus represented himself not just as chosen by God for the Persian throne, but as chosen by the deities *of other peoples* to become their king as well. The earliest example survives in the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, written early in 539 BCE, just before Cyrus took Babylon. Anticipating that his victory would liberate them from captivity,

36 On these events, see Dandamaev, *Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, pp. 286–95, Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, pp. 645–49, Charles D. Hamilton, *Sparta's Bitter Victories: Politics and Diplomacy in the Corinthian War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), E. Badian, "The King's Peace," in Michael A. Flower and Mark Toher, eds., *Georgica: Greek Studies in honour of George Cawkwell* (London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1991), pp. 25–48, Ralf Urban, *Der Königsfrieden von 387/6 v. Chr.: Vorgeschichte, Zustandkommen, Ergebnis und politische Umsetzung* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1991) and Cesar Fornis, *Grecia exhausta. Ensayo sobre la guerra de Corinto* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

37 Dandamaev, *Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, p. 293. Most broadly on the Achaemenid rulers' use of their wealth to influence policies and events in Greece, which increased consistently from about 400 BCE onward, see Lewis, "Persian Gold in Greek International Relations," op cit., pp. 227–34.

38 Among the books treating Achaemenid royal ideology and discourse (textual and iconographic), the following are particularly noteworthy: Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*, Margaret Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achnaemenid Art* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), Peter Frei and Klaus Koch, *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), and Gregor Ahn, *Religiöse Herrscherlegitimation im achämenidischen Iran* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992). Particularly useful on the broad dissemination of royal discourse is Robert Rollinger, "Royal Strategies of Representation and the Language(s) of Power: Some Considerations on the Audience and the Dissemination of the Achaemenid Royal Inscriptions," in Stephan Procházka, Lucian Reinfandt, and Sven Tost, eds., *Official Epistolography and the Language(s) of Power* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015), pp. 117–30.

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return them to their homeland, and permit restoration of their temple, leaders of the Babylonian Jewish community were persuaded to rally support for the Persian. Toward that end, the Biblical text depicts Yahweh grasping Cyrus by the right hand, promising divine assistance and, in an absolutely unprecedented gesture, naming him heir to the Israelite throne (Hebrew *mašiaḥ*, literally "the anointed," the title regularly given a crown prince in the line of David).[39] A second example is the Cyrus Cylinder, written in Akkadian in late 539, telling the newly conquered people of Babylon that a) Nabonidus, their last native king, had dishonored Marduk, the city's chief god; b) an angry Marduk therefore abandoned the city to search for a more righteous ruler; c) having found Cyrus worthy, he granted him kingship of all the world and d) let him take Babylon, thereby "saving the city from oppression."[40]

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39 Isaiah 45:1–4, on which see Klaus Koch, "Die Stellung des Kyros im Geschichtsbild Deuterojesajas und ihre überlieferungsgeschichtliche Verankerung," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 (1972): 352–56, Amnon Netzer, "Some Notes on the Characterization of Cyrus the Great in Jewish and Judeo-Persian Writings," *Acta Iranica* 2 (1974): 35–52, Antii Laato, *The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40–55* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1992), and Lisbeth S. Fried, "Cyrus the Messiah? The Historical Background to Isaiah 45:1," *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 373–93.

40 Text taken from the critical edition of Hanspeter Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros' des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften. Textausgabe und Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001). Lines 11–17 of the Cylinder are particularly important.

> (Marduk) searched all lands, seeking a righteous ruler according to his heart's wish, whose hand he would grasp. He pronounced the name of Cyrus, king of Anšan. He proclaimed his name for kingship of all the world … Marduk, the great lord, who leads his people, looked joyfully at [Cyrus's] good deeds and righteous heart. He ordered him to go to his city, Babylon. He set him on the road to Babylon and marched at his side like a friend and companion.… Without conflict or battle, he let him enter Babylon, his city. He saved Babylon from oppression.
>
> *kul-lat ma-ta-a-ta ka-li-ši-na i-ḫi-iṭ ib-re-e-ma iš-te-'e-e-ma ma-al-ki i-šá-ru bi-bil šà-bi-ša it-ta-ma-aḫ qa-tu-uš-šu [ku-ra-aš lugal uru an-ša-an it-ta-bi ni-bi-it-su a-na ma-li-ku-ti kul-la-ta nap-ḫar iz-zak-ra šu-um-šu kur qu-ti-i gi-mir um-man-man-da ú-ka-an-ni-ša a-na še-pi-šu ùgmeš ṣal-mat sag.du ša ú-ša-ak-ši-du qa-ta-a-šú i-na ki-it-tì ù mi-šá-ru iš-te-né-'e-e-ši-na-a-ti [d]amar.utu en gal ta-ru-ú ùg[meš]-šú ep-še-e-ti-ša dam-qa-a-ta ù šà-ba-šu i-ša-ra ḫa-di-iš ip-pa-li-i[s] a-na uru-šu ka.dingir[meš ki] a-la-ak-šu iq-bi ú-ša-aṣ-bi-it-su-ma ḫar-ra-nu tin.tir[ki] ki-ma ib-ri ù tap-pe-e it-tal-la-ka i-da-a-šu um-ma-ni-šu rap-ša-a-ti ša ki-ma me-e íd la ú-ta-ad-du-ú ni-ba-šu-un [giš]tukul[meš]-šu-nu ṣa-an-du-ma i-ša-ad-di-ḫa i-da-a-šu ba-lu qab-li ù ta-ḫa-zi ú-še-ri-ba-áš qé-reb šu.an.na[ki] uru-šu ká.dingir[meš ki] i-ṭi-ir i-na šap-ša-qí.*

See further Janos Harmatta, "The Literary Patterns of the Babylonian Edict of Cyrus," *Acta Antiqua Hungarica* 19 (1971): 217–31, Amélie Kuhrt, "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25 (1983): 83–97, Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Reign of Nabonidus, King of Babylon 556–539 B.C.* (New Haven:

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Both texts attempt to narrate – and ultimately to produce – a variation on the "Stranger King" paradigm that Marshall Sahlins has explicated, whereby Achaemenid rule represented not simply the conquest of one people by another, but the synthesis and mutual encompassment of two populations possessed of complementary powers. The foreigner supplied an innovative dynamism and revitalizing force that could only come from outside, while the resident population provided the ancient sacral connection requisite for the prosperity of their land.[41] Apparently, some Israelites and Babylonians were willing to entertain this view, at least initially, although some saw (or came to see) the Persians as foreign oppressors. Thus, Israel remained ever grateful for and loyal to Persian rule, while Babylon, which welcomed Cyrus in 539, repeatedly rebelled against his successors.[42]

3.2 The two Babylonian uprisings of 522 and the six other revolts of that year prompted Darius to deploy a much more aggressive discourse than that of Cyrus. This, however, he used once only: in the monumental inscription he had cut on the rockface of Bisitun and disseminated throughout the empire following his consolidation of power (521 BCE).[43]

Yale University Press, 1989), Irving Finkel, ed., *The Cyrus Cylinder: The King of Persia's Proclamation from Ancient Babylonia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), and R.J. van der Spek, "Cyrus the Great, Exiles, and Foreign Gods: A Comparison of Assyrian and Persian Policies on Subject Nations," in Michael Kozuh, Wouter Henkelman, Charles Jones, and Christopher Woods, eds., *Extraction & Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2014), pp. 233–64.

41 On the figure of the stranger-king, see Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), idem, "The Stranger-King Or Elementary Forms of the Political Life," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 36 (2008): 177–99, idem, "The Alterity of Power and Vice Versa, with Reflections on Stranger Kings and the Real-Politics of the Marvellous," in Anthony McElligott, Liam Chambers, Clara Breathnach, and Catherine Lawless, eds., *History: From Medieval Ireland to the Post-Modern World* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2011), pp. 63–101, and Marshall Sahlins and David Graeber, *On Kings* (Chicago: Hau Books, 2017).

42 Babylon experienced a serious revolts in 522 BCE, another in 521, another in 484, and yet again in 482. See further George Cameron, "Darius and Xerxes in Babylonia," *American Journal of Semitic Languages* 58 (1941): 314–25, Amélie Kuhrt and Susan Sherwin-White, "Xerxes' Destruction of Babylonian Temples," *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987): 69–78, Pierre Briant, "La date des révoltes babyloniennes contre Xerxès," *Studia Iranica* 21 (1992): 7–20, and M.A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, trans. W.J. Vogelsang (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), pp. 114–16, 122–25, and 183–87.

43 The critical edition of this extraordinarily important trilingual text is Rüdiger Schmitt, ed., *The Bisitun Inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian Text* (London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, 1991). Its dissemination and ideological import have been much discussed. Most recently, see Chul-Hyun Bae, *Comparative Studies of King Darius's Bisitun Inscription* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Dept. of Near Eastern Languages

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The Bisitun text works relentlessly to make two points. First, with reference to hard power, it shows that Darius had excellent troops at his disposal, did not hesitate to exercise extreme violence, and although his troops might suffer occasional setbacks, he invariably triumphed. This is, in fact, the only inscription in the surviving Achaemenid corpus that describes the use of force, detailing Darius's assassination of his predecessor (September 522), the eight rebellions that followed, and the nineteen battles in which his armies suppressed them (October 522–December 521). By his account, these conflicts produced 129,638 fatalities, 28,506 prisoners, and the execution of 206 rebel leaders, many by public impaling.[44]

Second, with reference to soft power, it attributes his success to "the Wise Lord's will" (*vašna Auramazdāha*, a phrase that recurs 36 times) and "the Wise Lord's aid" (*Auramazdāmaį upastām abara*, 19 times) construing the King's victories as signs of divine favor. Further, it asserts that God chose Darius because he embodied absolute Truth, the central value of Achaemenid ideology, on which moral, sociopolitical, and cosmic order depends.[45] Conversely, the inscription makes "the Lie" the ultimate source of evil and sees its influence behind all disorder, rebellion, and resistance to the King (lying is denounced 29 times, including the minor inscriptions).[46] The goal of the text, which

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Dissertation, 2001), Gard Grannerød, "'By the Favour of Ahuramazda I am King': On the Promulgation of a Persian Text among Babylonians and Judaeans," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 44 (2013): 455–80, Margaret Cool Root, "Defining the Divine in Achaemenid Persian Kingship: The View from Bisitun," in Lynette Mitchell and Charles Melville, eds., *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Mediaeval Worlds* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2013), pp. 23–65.

44 These figures are given in the Akkadian and Aramaic versions of the Bisitun inscription, but not the Elamite or Old Persian versions. The most extensive discussion of their significance, reliability, etc., is John O. Hyland, "The Casualty Figures in Darius' Bisitun Inscription, *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 1 (2014): 173–99.

45 The crucial passage is DB §63:

> Proclaims Darius the king: For this reason the Wise Lord bore me aid, he and the other gods that are: Because I was not vulnerable to deception, I was not possessed by the Lie, I was not a deceit-doer, neither I nor my lineage. I conducted myself according to rectitude.
>
> *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaθiya: avahyarādīmaį Auramazdā upastām abara utā aniyāha bagāha, tayaį hanti, yaθā naį arīka āham, naį draųjana āham, naį zūrakara āham, naį adam naįmaį taųmā, upari įštām upariyāyam .*

On the opposition of Truth and Lie as a central construct of ancient Iranian ethics and cosmology, see Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Truth and Deception in Ancient Iran," in Carlo Cereti and Farrokh Vajifdar, eds., *Ataš-e Dorun: The Fire Within* (N.p.: Mehrborzin Soroushian, 2003), pp. 383–434.

46 The noun *draųga* ("the Lie") appears at DB §§10, 54, 55, 56; *draųjana* ("liar, one possessed of and by the Lie") at §63; *duruxta* ("something that has been lied, a falsehood") at §58; the

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was translated into multiple languages and disseminated throughout the empire,[47] was not only to legitimate Darius's power, but to discourage all opposition by defining it as Lie-inspired, antithetical to God's will, and thus doomed to failure.

3.3 The Bisitun text having staked Darius's monopolistic claims on military success and truth itself, subsequent Achaemenid descriptions barely mention force, violence, and hard power.[48] In later texts, Darius and his scribes worked out a theology of empire that was embraced by all his successors until the fall of the dynasty (330 BCE), in which formulaic repetition of transcendent values replaced concern for the flux of historic events. Central to this discursive initiative was a cosmogonic myth, repeated in twenty-two inscriptions throughout

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verb *duruj-* ("to lie") at §§11, 16, 49, 52, 54, 57 and in nine of the minor inscriptions (DBb, DBc, DBd, DBe, DBf, DBg, DBh, DBi). At DB §§54–55, the historic narrative of Darius's triumph over the Lie gives way to his advice for all future kings.

> Proclaims Darius the king: These are the lands and peoples that became rebellious. The Lie made them rebellious so that these men lied to the people. Then the Wise Lord put them into my hand. As was my desire, so I did unto them.
>
> Proclaims Darius the king: You who may later be king here: Protect yourself boldly from the Lie! The man who is a liar, punish him so he is well-punished if you would think thus: "Let my land and people be healthy/secure."
>
> *θāti Darāyavauš xšāyaϑiya: dahyāva imā, tayā hamiçiyā abava; draⱬgadiš hamiçiyā akunaⱬš, taya imā kāram adurujiyaša; pasāvadiš Auramazdā manā dastayā akunaⱬš; yaϑā mām kāma, avaϑādiš akunavam.*
>
> *θāti Darāyavauš xšāyaϑiya: tuvam kā, xšāyaϑiya haya aparam āhi, hacā draⱬgā dr̥šam patipayauvā, martiya, haya draⱬjana ahati, avam ufraštam pr̥sā, yadi avaϑā, maniyāhaⱬ: "dahyāⱬšmaⱬ duruvā ahati".*

47 The inscription itself is trilingual (Old Persian, Elamite, Akkadian), and the system for writing Old Persian in cuneiform was first used in this text and probably invented for it. In addition to the inscription itself, the text was reproduced on parchment in various languages (copies in Aramaic and Akkadian have been found) and disseminated throughout the empire, as described in DB §70.

> Proclaims Darius the king: By the Wise Lord's will, this is the form of script that I made. Further, it was in Aryan, and it was inscribed in clay and on parchment. And further, I made my signature. And further, I made the lineage. And this was written and read to me. Afterward, I dispatched this form of script everywhere through the lands and peoples.
>
> *θāti Dārayavauš xšāyaϑiya: vašnā Auramazdāha ima dipiciçam, taya adam akunavam patišam ariyā; utā pavastāyā utā carmā gr̥ftam āha; patišamci nāmanāfam[ʔ] akunavam; patišam uvadātam[ʔ] akunavam; utā niyapinϑiya utā patiyafraϑiya paⱬšiyā mām; pasāva ima dipiciçam adam frāstāyam vispadā antar dahyāva.*

48 The sole exception in the entire corpus is XPh §4a, which mentions a rebellion Xerxes suppressed toward the beginning of his reign, but does so in such cursory fashion that one has no idea where it occurred, how extensive it was, or the means through which it was defeated.

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the realm[49] that told how the Wise Lord created humanity in unity, harmony, and "happiness" (*šiyāti*), a condition in which all people enjoyed peace, contentment, and the possession of every good thing.[50] That ideal was disrupted by "the Lie," however, under whose effects humanity broke into competing groups (nations, races, factions, e.g.), who clung to some piece of happiness, while envying – and struggling to acquire – the pieces controlled by others. It was in response to this crisis, according to the myth, that the Creator bestowed kingship on Achaemenid rulers, situated at the world's center, whom he entrusted with the task of suppressing the Lie and restoring the world's perfection.

From this perspective, each addition to the empire, whether by conquest or diplomacy, was a step toward the renewal of human unity. As various peoples learned of the Achaemenid King's truthfulness, benevolence, and divine favor, it was expected they would accept his rule, although some might be more difficult to persuade than others (especially those distant from the Persian center, who were more subject to the Lie). Those who understood things correctly and wished to assist in the project of world restitution began by sending the King some of the earth and water distinctive to their territories,[51] to be followed by their rarest and most precious plants, animals, and material substances. While some might call these "tribute," the Persians referred to them as a "portion"

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49 Darius made the creation account the first paragraph in nine of his post-Bisitun inscriptions (DNa, DNb, DSe, DSf, DSs, DSt, DSab, DE, DZc). Xerxes repeated this pattern in nine inscriptions (XPa, XPb, XPc, XPd, XPf, XPh, XPl, XE, XV), and the same formulaic passage was given similarly prominent placement by Artaxerxes I, Darius II, Artaxerxes II, and Artaxerxes III (A^1Pa, D^2Ha, A^2Hc, A^3Pa, respectively). The fullest study of these texts is Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les créations d' Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58. See also Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*.

50 On the significance of the primordial "happiness" God intended for humanity, see Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Vieux-Perse *šiyāti*," in Jean Kellens, ed., *La religion iranienne à l'époque achéménide* (Ghent: Iranica Antiqua, 1991), pp. 13–21, Jean Kellens, "L'âme entre le cadavre et le paradis," *Journal Asiatique* 283 (1995): 34–38, Andrea Piras, "A proposito di antico-persiano *šiyāti*," *Studi Orientali e Linguistici* 5 (1994–95): 91–97, and Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*.

51 On prestations of earth and water as tokens of submission, see Amélie Kuhrt, "Earth and Water," *Achaemenid History* 3 (1988): 87–99, Giuseppe Nenci, "La formula della richiesta della terra e dell' acqua nel lessico diplomatico achemenide," in Maria Gabriella Bertinelli Angeli and Luigi Piccirilli, eds., *Linguaggio e terminologia diplomatica dall' Antico Oriente all' Impero Bizantino* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 2001), pp. 32–42 (who underestimates the significance of the gesture), and Matthew Waters, "Earth, Water, and Friendship with the King: Argos and Persia in the Mid-fifth Century," in Kozuh et al, eds., *Extraction & Control*, op cit., pp. 331–36.

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(*bāji*), i.e. a piece of the perfect happiness that the Lie shattered and scattered, whose wholeness was now being restored by the King's unifying actions.[52]

Among the primary demonstrations of such restorative action were the spectacular palaces of Susa (Figures 8.5–7)[53] and Persepolis (Figures 8.8–10),[54] which were meant to be legible as instantiations of a world growing ever more united, more peaceful, more aesthetically integrative, impressive and pleasing. Built of the finest materials from throughout the empire, worked by the foremost artisans of every nation, they were adorned with images that showed all the King's subjects collaborating to produce the greatest beauty and happiness humanity has known since the time of creation.

Paradise gardens were another instantiation of this utopian vision and one that has left a lasting trace on the collective imaginary. The word itself is a Persian term (*para-daidā-*), denoting a space separated from mundane reality by encircling walls. Plants and animals of every species flourished there, having been transplanted and imported from every corner of the globe. Irrigation provided them with an abundance of pure, fructifying water, which also figured in fountains and beautiful displays. Fruit trees provided shade, as well as sweet fragrance and flavors, while plantings were organized for maximal aesthetic effect (Figure 8.11).[55]

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52 On the delivery of "portions" in relation to the project of restoring primordial unity and happiness, see Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*, pp. 117–23. Others have understood *bāji* more simply to be the portion due to the King. Thus, inter alia, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Bāji," *Achaemenid History* 11 (1998): 23–34.

53 The foundational inscriptions at Susa include detailed discussion of the contributions in skilled artisanal manpower and precious substances to be made by every constituent people of the empire (DSf §§3e–3k, DSz §§8–13, and DSaa §§3–4). At DSa §2, DSf §4, DSj §3, DSo, DSz §14, Darius proclaimed this palace a "wonder" (*fraša*), the same term he used to describe the Wise Lord's creation of heaven and earth at DSs, DNb §1 and DSs §1 (thus also XPl §1). Most extensively on the palace itself, see Jean Perrot, ed., *The Palace of Darius at Susa: The Great Royal Residence of Achaemenid Persia*, trans. G. Collon, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013); on the relation among the foundation texts, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Sur la charte de fondation DSaa," *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale* 77 (1983): 177–79.

54 The literature on the palace complex at Persepolis and its reliefs, particularly the procession of ethnically identifiable tribute-bearers on the Apadana steps is enormous. Inter alia, see Erich Schmidt, *Persepolis*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1953–70), Gerold Walser, *Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persepolis* (Berlin: Gebrüdern Mann, 1966), Ann Britt Tilia, *Studies and Restorations at Persepolis and Other Sites of Fārs*, 2 vols. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1972–78), and Heidemarie Koch, *Persepolis glänzende Hauptstadt des Perserreichs* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2001).

55 On the paradise gardens, see Wolfgang Fauth, "Der königliche Gärtner und Jäger im Paradeisos: Beobachtungen zur Rolle des Herrschers in der vorderasiatischen Hortikultur," *Persica* 8 (1979): 1–53, David Stronach, "The Garden as a Political Statement: Some Case

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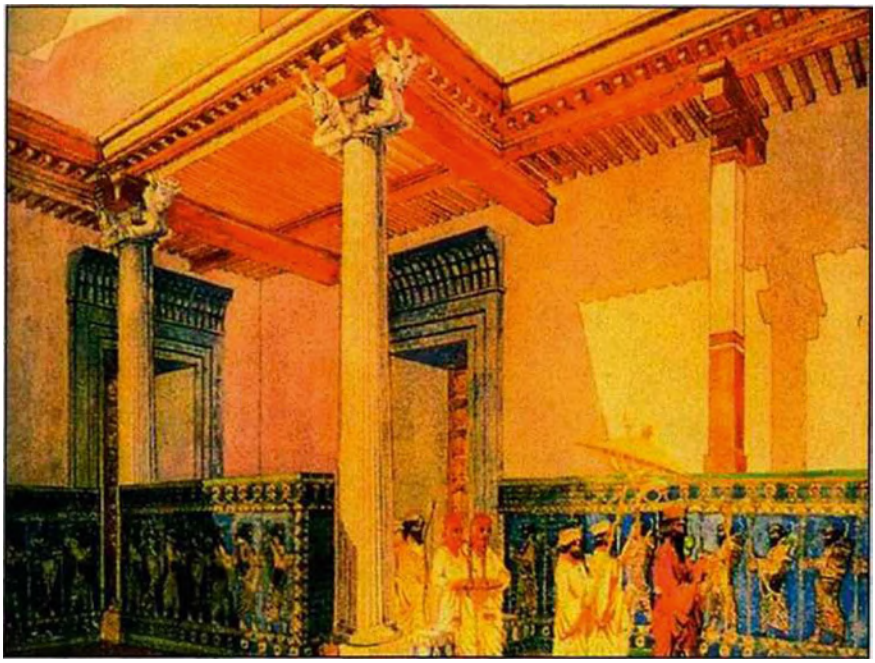

FIGURE 8.5 Susa palace (1913 watercolor by the French archaeologist and architect Maurice Pillet)

FIGURE 8.6 Polychrome tile relief of soldiers armed with bow and spear, from the palace at Susa

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FIGURE 8.7 Polychrome tile relief of winged griffins under the emblem of the Wise Lord, from the palace at Susa

FIGURE 8.8 Persepolis palace, artists' reconstruction by The Persepolis3D Project, Kourosh Afhami and Wolfgang Gambke

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FIGURE 8.9 Persepolis, Apadana steps. Relief sculptures of different populations (as indicated by dress, physiognomy, and accompanying animals) delivering tribute to the King

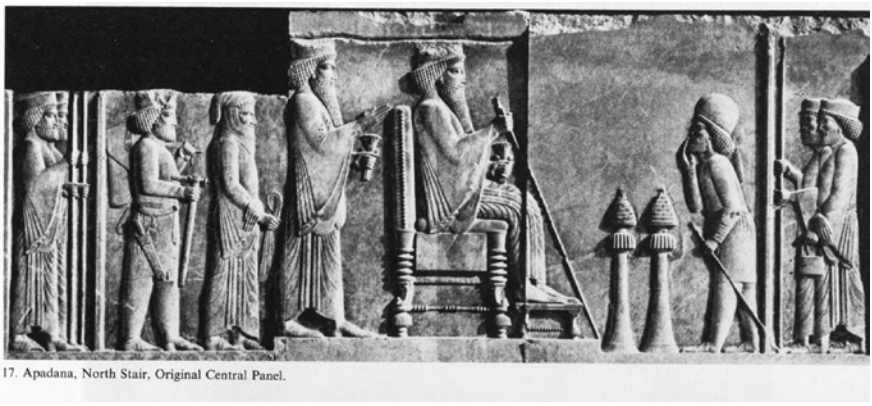

FIGURE 8.10 Persepolis, Apadana steps. Relief sculpture of the King receiving delegations

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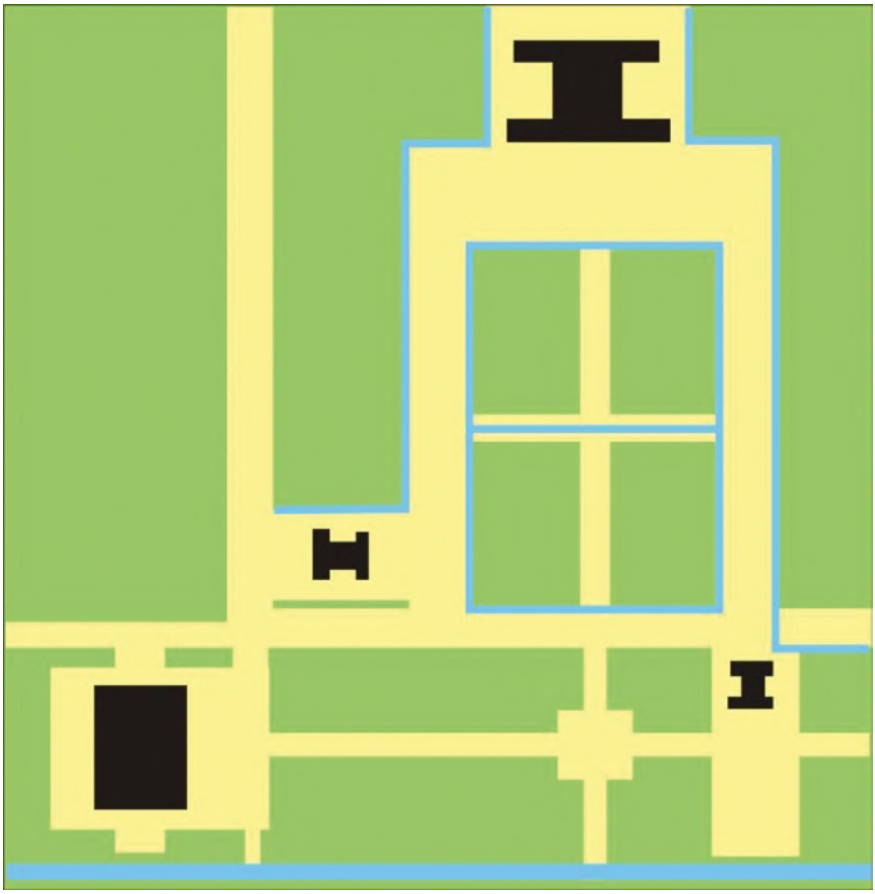

FIGURE 8.11 Plan of the paradise-garden excavated at Pasargadae (after Stronach). Black areas indicate palaces and colonnades; green areas, plantings; yellow areas, walkways; blue areas, irrigation channels

Gardens of this sort were established throughout the empire, their number multiplying as the empire grew. Essentially, they were sites of recreation in both the common and a more literal sense. Not only were they places where friends and servants of the King could relax and enjoy themselves, they were sites where the condition God originally intended for all humanity had been

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Studies from the Near East in the First Millennium B.C.," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 4 (1990): 171–80, Christopher Tuplin, "The Parks and Gardens of the Achaemenid Empire," in idem, *Achaemenid Studies* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), pp. 80–131, Anders Hultgård, "Das Paradies: Vom Park des Perserkönigs zum Ort der Seligen," in Martin Hengel, et al., *La cité de Dieu/Die Stadt Gottes* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2000), pp. 1–43, and Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*.

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recovered and put on display, as is clear from the name given one garden: "All-Happiness" (*Vispa-šiyāti*), using the same term that figures in the creation account.[56]

In addition to their use-value, such gardens also functioned as potent signs, displaying to the world what the Achaemenid empire took itself to be and what it was capable of accomplishing. An advertisement, in effect, that flashed in the ancient equivalent of neon letters: "Join us," it called, "and we will all live this kind of existence." The success of this propaganda campaign can be measured by the numerous languages into which the Persian term "paradise" entered as a loanword, denoting a state – and place, regularly identified as a garden – of absolute harmony, perfect satisfaction, and eternal peace.[57] Although many were dazzled by these incomparable showpieces, much as their creators and sponsors intended, others seem to have reacted with suspicion and resentment, like the Spartan Agesilaos, mentioned above, who not only scorned darics and planned attacks on the Achaemenid palaces, but made a point of destroying several paradise gardens.[58]

4

We have looked at three forms of power exercised by Achaemenid rulers, each one softer than the last. What the three have in common is that each relied on a process of dissemination, whereby missiles, money, and messages were showered on target populations in hopes of expanding the empire's wealth, power, territory and population or, at the very least, improving its image and extending its influence. Clearly, significant differences attended these forms. Arrows were designed to intimidate and conquer; darics to tempt, flatter, and obligate; inscriptions and monuments, to impress and persuade. All three, however, were meant to strike from a distance and make a dramatic impression, convincing those at whom they were directed (as well as any interested

56 The significance of this name was first recognized by Émile Benveniste, "Notes sur les tablettes élamites de Persépolis," *Journal Asiatique* 246 (1958): 57–58. More recently, see Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Achaemenid **Vispašiyātiš*, Sasanian *Wispšād*," *Studia Iranica* 23 (1994): 79–80 and Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Le paradis perse 'Tout Bonheur," in Éric Morvillez, ed., *Paradeisos. Genèse et métamorphose de la notion de paradis dans l'Antiquité* (Paris: Éditions de Boccard, 2014), pp. 35–39.

57 Old Persian *paridaida* ("walled garden") enters the following ancient languages as a loanword: Akkadian (*pardēsu*), Arabic (*firdaus*), Armenian (*partēz*), Elamite (*partētaš*), Greek (*paradeisos*), Hebrew (*pardēs*). From Greek, it then enters virtually all European languages.

58 As recounted by Diodorus Siculus 14.80.2, Xenophon, *Hellenica* 4.1.15–16 and 33.

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observers) that the empire was already large and powerful, possessed virtually boundless resources, and was prepared to use all its means to realize goals that its discourse characterized as not only moral, but divinely chartered and cosmically beneficial.

This was, of course, the idealized self-understanding of the empire and as such, more convincing to rulers than to the ruled or to outside observers. Even for insiders and true believers, this story of imperial potency and divine mission remained at best a partial truth, whose successful propagation depended on elisions, erasures, and euphemisms that obscure the ways "soft" power and high ideals rely on harder kinds of force and dirtier kinds of dealing.

Indigenous evidence for the history of the Achaemenids after Xerxes is regrettably scarce and the Greek authors who characterized the later empire as luxurious, decadent and corrupt are now considered untrustworthy and prejudicial. Reacting against the bias of such sources, current scholarship tends to emphasize the stability, resilience, and astute management of the empire down to its last decade.[59] In keeping with this revisionist turn, the shift from "hard" to "soft" power can be understood not as a sign of weakness, but as a strategic reorientation and tactical adjustment undertaken by a mature and judicious polity. Having experienced military setbacks on distant terrain where its logistic capacities were stretched too far,[60] the empire found less brutal, less costly, and more effective ways to project its influence.

Such a view has much to recommend it. Still, it remains the case that in the century and a half after their defeats at Salamis and Plataea, the Achaemenids acquired no new territories or populations. However skillfully they deployed their enormous wealth, however magnificent were the monuments they built, however shrewd and alluring the rhetoric they disseminated, these forms of

59 Most influentially on the empire's later history and against the narrative of decadence, see Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, ibid., "Histoire et idéologie: Les Grecs et la décadence perse," in Marie-Madeleine Mactoux and Evelyne Geny, eds., *Mélanges Pierre Lévêque*. Vol. 2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1995), pp. 33–47, and Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Decadence in the Empire or Decadence in the Sources?," *Achaemenid History* 1 (1987): 33–46. See also Josef Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*, trans. Azizeh Azodi (London: I/B. Tauris, 1996), Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), and Thomas Harrison, *Writing Ancient Persia* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), the last of whom argues that the revisionist view is itself exaggerated and stands in need of correction.

60 For a less ideological account than is found in the Greek sources for the reasons Xerxes' invasion failed, see T. Cuyler Young, "480/79 BC – a Persian Perspective," *Iranica Antiqua* 15 (1980): 213–39 and Jack Martin Balcer, "The Persian Wars against Greece: A Reassessment," *Historia* 38 (1989): 127–43.

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soft power proved no more able to win over non-Persians than did the direct exercise of military force.

This prompts a few broader observations about the relations of "soft" and "hard power." Achaemenid Persia was one of the largest, wealthiest, and most resourceful empires of antiquity; not coincidentally, it demonstrated considerable flexibility in its use of power. As we've seen, it deployed both soft and hard forms in conjunction, such that softer forms came to the fore as the hard ones receded from view, while remaining an ever-present potential. The kinds of soft power that emerged, moreover, were symbolically nuanced and strategically deployed to achieve goals that had proven unrealizable through intimidation and blunt force.

In most ways, this situation seems typical, as soft power always operates in close – if sometimes veiled and implicit – relation to hard power of the military sort, for which it is a complement and never a substitute. Impressive monuments, lofty ideals, and spectacular displays of largesse become not just signs, but effective instruments of power when observers and recipients draw a set of inferences from them. To wit: a) the people who have produced these things possess great wealth, energy, and vision; b) they have used some portion of their abilities and resources to make such wonders and benefits available to people beyond their borders; c) they are also capable of behaving differently, as a very large share of their resources continues to support a formidable military; d) it is therefore a good idea to establish and maintain friendship, even on an unequal basis. But should any step in this logic become subject to skepticism and critique, the effects of soft power are correspondingly diminished.

Persia's imperial ambitions were ultimately checked, but subsequent history suggests that the strategic use of soft and hard powers has remained relevant to virtually all expansionist regimes. Critical analysis of empire, whether in antiquity or the present, must thus be attuned to cultural styles and ideological appeals, as well as the concerns of realpolitik in order to comprehend how the superficially different forms of coercion and persuasion, force and discourse, intimidation and seduction or, to put it in the Achaemenid idiom, how literal and figurative archers articulate with one another in grander strategies of expansion and domination.

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PART 3

Pahlavi

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CHAPTER 9

Physiological Speculation and Social Patterning in a Pahlavi Text

The study of ancient science is frequently rewarding, for it may furnish convincing evidence of culture contact, as in Sir Harold W. Bailey's recognition of Aristotelian and Hippocratic influence on discussions of the nature of the human body in several Middle Persian texts.[1] In this study, among the most striking pieces of evidence Bailey cited was a passage (*Zād Spram* 30.14) concerned with the "watery" (*ābīg*) elements of the body,[2] said to be four in number, which, as he showed, closely parallel the four humors of Hippocratic theory.[3] Although other elements of Bailey's broader argument may remain subject to debate, in this specific datum, the influence of Greek learning in an Iranian milieu is incontestably evident.

There are, however, other reasons for studying ancient speculation on the nature and workings of the natural world, not least of which is the way they occasionally encode concerns of a distinctly sociopolitical nature. Such, I hope to show, is true in the case of the Iranian development of the four humor theory, as becomes clear when one considers the relevant *Zād Spram* passage in its entirety. Although Bailey provided a transliteration of this text (*Zād Spram* 30.14–19), he neither translated nor discussed any of its contents beyond the names given the four bodily fluids.[4] The sole translation available, to the best of my knowledge, is that of Anklesaria, in which certain misunderstandings so distort its sense as to make the text quite incomprehensible.[5] It thus seems

1 This chapter was originally published in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988): 135–140. H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth Century Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943), pp. 78–119.

2 *Zād Spram* 30.3 asserts that "The body is threefold: the bodily being which is bone, and [that which is] of water, and [that which is] of wind." *tanīg 3 ī ast tanīgardīg ud ābīg ud wādīg*. There then follows an analysis of these three categories of bodily substance, of which the passage under consideration here is a part.

3 Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, op cit., p. 105.

4 As is so often the case, secure dating of the *contents* within a Middle Persian text committed to writing in the ninth century of our era is virtually impossible. Given certain details oin the passage to be considered, it seems most plausible to me that its key concepts are rooted in the Sassanian period, but I see no secure way to preclude either an earlier or later dating.

5 Behramgore Tehmurasp Anklesaria, *Vichitakiha-i Zatsparam, with Text and Introduction* (Bombay: Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds & Properties, 1964), pp. cvi–cvii. Bailey's

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worth providing a new rendition of *Zād Spram* 30.14–19, paragraph by paragraph, with a detailed analysis of its content.

> 14. There are four essential fluids in the body, which are: Blood, Phlegm, Red Bile, and Black Bile.[6]

Although similar lists of bodily fluids can be found in other Middle Persian texts, it is in this passage that the closest correspondence exists to the system that is common in Hippocratic medicine.[7] Thus, if one compares ZS 30.14 to chapter four of the Hippocratic text "Concerning the Nature of Man" (*Peri Physios Anthrōpou*), one finds virtually the same fluids listed in identical order: first blood (Pahlavi *xōn*, Greek *haima*), then phlegm (Pahl. *drēm*, Gk. *phlegma*), and last black bile (Pahl. *wiš ī syā*, Gk. *kholēn melainan*). The sole divergence is that in the third position, where the Greek text has "yellow bile" (*kholēn xanthēn*), the Iranian has "red bile" (*wiš ī suxr*) and even this minor difference is made more minimal still by its specification that the color of "red bile" is "variable from red to yellow" (*gōn suxr ō zardīh wardišnīg*, *Zād Spram* 30.15).

Also of interest is the term that is used to describe these fluids as a set: *āb mādagwar*, which I have translated "essential fluids," following established practice.[8] As is plainly evident, however, *mādagwar* is derived from *mādag* "female" (cf. Avestan *mātar*, Sanskrit *mātṛ*, Old High German *muotar*, etc.), and

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transliteration is found at pp. 211–12 of *Zoroastrian Problems*, op cit. Cf. Ph. Gignoux and A. Tafazzoli, *Anthologie de Zādspram* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1993); cf. pp. 99–101, which appeared after this chapter was first published.

6 *āb*[*ān*] *andar tan mādagwar 4, ī hast* $^{+}$*xōn ud drēm ud wiš ī suxr ud wiš ī syā.*

Textual notes: *mādagwar, not mādagwarīhā*, following the TD MS, pace Anklesaria and Bailey. The term is adjectival, modifying *āb*. It is possible that the *-īhā* suffix might signify the plural, in which case, however, we ought expect **ābān*. Both manuscripts (TD and BK) omit *xōn* here. The TD MS has *3* instead of *4,* in keeping with this omission. BK, however, has *4* in accord with the full set of bodily fluids spelled out in the discussion that follows. *wiš* "bile" is homographic with *wēh* "good." Anklesaria consistently misinterprets it as the latter term.

7 Thus, the set of four humors given at *Dēnkard* 3.263 (MS B 211.12–13) fails to differentiate between the two types of bile and adds "breath" (*wād*) to fill out the set. A vague association is also there advanced between the humors – breath, blood, bile, and phlegm – and the four "worldly elements of the body" (*gēhān āmēzišnīg tan ristān*): fire (*ādur*), wind (*wād*), moisture (*nām*), and clay (*gil*). Although it is not spelled out, one probably ought correlate fire to blood, wind to breath, moisture to phlegm, and clay to bile.

8 Thus D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 53 and Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), vol. 2, p. 129.

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"essential" fails to capture this dimension of its meaning. Nyberg attempted to clarify things by arguing that the broader semantic range of *mādag* included an abstract dimension (thus "the essential element of anything, its core, essence; materials");[9] conversely, however, the designation of certain things as *mādagwar* includes an element of (gender-specific) concretion, such things being in some sense "maternal." The importance of this will become evident when the four "essential/maternal" fluids are brought in conjunction with another, decidedly non-maternal fluid.

> 15. The nature of blood is warm and moist, its color red, its taste sweet, and its dwelling is in the liver.[10] The nature of phlegm is cold and moist, its color white, its taste salt, and its dwelling is in the lungs. The nature of red bile is warm and dry, its color is variable from red to yellow, its taste bitter, and its dwelling is in the gall bladder. The nature of black bile is cold and dry, its color black, its taste sour, and its dwelling is in the spleen.[11]

The first piece of information that is given regarding each of the fluids is its "nature" or "substance" (*gōhr*).[12] More precisely, an analysis is offered for each fluid as to whether it possesses warmth or cold, moisture or dryness. Classification along these lines yields a quadripartite taxonomy, as shown in Table 9.1.

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9 Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, op cit., vol. 2, p. 129 (under *mātakīk*). Cf. the relation between Latin *māter* and *māteria*.

10 Thus the text, although Anklesaria consistently translates *jagar* by "heart," in keeping with what is now known about the circulation of the blood. That this is the liver, however, and not the heart, is made certain not only by the etymology of Pahlavi *jagar* (cf. Avestan *yākarə*, Sanskrit *yakṛt*, Persian *jigar*, Greek *hēpar*, Latin *iecur*, Lithuatian *jaknos* [plural]), but also by the specification later in the text that the gall bladder (*zahrag*) is located *above* the *jagar* (*zahrag ī **azabar** jagar bē jahēd*).

11 *xōn gohr garm ud xwēd, uš gōn suxr, uš mizag šīrēn, uš kadag pad jagar, drēm sard <ud> xwēd, ud gōn spēd, mizag sōr, uš kadag pad suš. wiš ī suxr garm <ud> hušk ud gōn suxr ō zardīh wardišnīg, uš mizag taxl, uš kadag pad zahrag. ud wiš ī syā sard <ud> hušk, uš gōn syā uš mizag* $^{+}$*truf̌š, uš kadag pad spul.*

Textual notes: *garm*, the reading of the BK MS is preferable to that of TD (*drēm*), pace Anklesaria.

12 On this term, see Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, op cit., pp. 89–90.

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TABLE 9.1 Classification of the Four Humors based upon their "nature" (*gōhr*)

	Moist	**Dry**
Warm	Blood	Red Bile
Cold	Phlegm	Black Bile

While accurate enough, such a representation is not the most instructive way to arrange these data, for the system does not really employ four variables, only two, dryness being the absence of moisture and cold the absence of warmth. Thus the taxonomy is actually constructed on two binary oppositions in proper Lévi-Straussian fashion. Moreover, there is a hierarchic dimension to this taxonomy, for in both cases the presence of the taxonomizing property is considered preferable to its absence, moisture and warmth being regarded as beneficent and sustaining of life (i.e. Ohrmazdian) in Zoroastrian theology, while dryness and cold are evil, being characteristic of death and stagnation (i.e. Ahrimanian).[13] Thus, an initial distinction is apparent between those benign fluids that possess moisture (blood and phlegm) and those that do not (red bile and black bile), the latter being classified as "bilious" or "poisonous," for the term that is translated "bile" (Pahlavi *wiš*) means more generally "venom, poison."[14] Further subdivision of the benign and bilious fluids according to the presence or absence of warmth yields the full system of relations that is shown in Figure 9.1.

In addition to the question of "nature" (*gōhr*), the four humors are described in terms of three other variables: color (*gōn*), taste (*mizag*), and bodily locus or "dwelling" (*kadag*). The result is a sixteen-item square (four humors × four variables), in which the properties of the humors are carefully set forth, without overlap or duplication, save in a single instance: the common color of blood and red bile. Even here, the text is at pains to establish differentiation, specifying that the latter fluid may vary in hue from red to yellow (*gōn suxr ō zardīh wardišnīg*) as we have already noted. The full system is shown in Table 9.2.

13 See, for instance, *Greater Bundahišn* 181.6 (TD^2 MS), *Dēnkart* 3.105, 123, 162, and 390, and the discussion of Mansour Shaki, "Some Basic Tenets of the Eclectic Metaphysics of the *Dēnkart*," *Archiv Orientální* 38 (1970): 295–96.

14 Mac Kenzie, *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, op cit., p. 92. Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, op cit., vol. 2, p. 215 does not even list the more specialized meaning "bile." Derivation is from the Avestan *viš-*, *viša-* "poison," cf. Sanskrit *viṣa-*, Greek *īos,* Latin *vīrus*, Irish *fí*.

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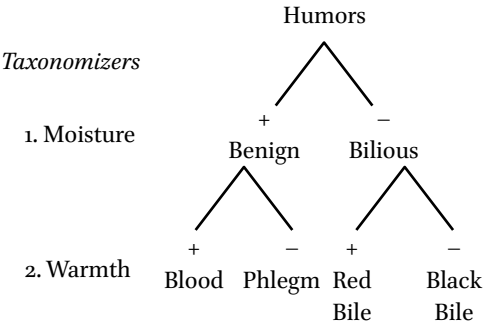

Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Coding	+/+	+/–	–/+	–/–
Humor	Blood	Phlegm	Red Bile	Black Bile

FIGURE 9.1 Classification of the Four Humors based on their "nature" (*gōhr*)

TABLE 9.2 Properties of the Four Humors

	Nature	**Color**	**Taste**	**Dwelling**
Blood	Warm/Moist	Red	Sweet	Liver
Phlegm	Cold/Moist	White	Salt	Lung
Red Bile	Warm/Dry	Red to Yellow	Bitter	Gall Bladder
Black Bile	Cold/Dry	Dark	Sour	Spleen

Having established the differences among these four fluids, the text continues, in a somewhat less successful – if no less interesting – attempt to work out their complex interrelations.

> 16. Blood, the foremost of these elements, goes to the liver and then in agitation goes mountain-climbing toward the head (?),[15] otherwise it collects and the phlegm awakes. Then the gall bladder, which is above the liver, draws up that which is thin and quick-flowing, which becomes red bile. It always keeps its mouth open. Red bile flows over the stomach,

15 This sentence employs imagistic language to describe imaginary physiological processes, making it difficult to interpret with any certainty.

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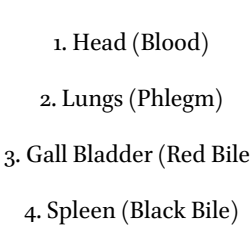

FIGURE 9.2
Vertical Mapping of the bodily loci associated with the Four Humors

> which digests food. That coarseness which remains is thrown down into the spleen and becomes black bile.[16]

Blood, earlier said to have its "dwelling" in the liver (ZS 30.15), is here brought into association with a second bodily locus: the head, to which it travels in the course of normal circulation. When this second "dwelling" is considered alongside the loci assigned to the other humors (none of which is assigned a similar secondary locus), a vertical mapping becomes apparent that parallels the hierarchy already established among the fluids based on their "natures" (compare Figure 9.2 to the rank order set forth in Figure 9.1).

Should the blood (or a portion of the blood) not ascend to the head, this sets in motion a complicated set of events. For when blood does not rise from the liver, the result is phlegm, although it is not made clear just how this residual blood catalyzes the production of phlegm in the lungs. Rather, we are simply told that when the blood "collects" (*cinēd*), then the phlegm "awakes" (*guhrāyēnēd*). In contrast, the relation of residual blood to the two kinds of bile is thoroughly explicated. For just as blood is made of two parts – one that rises and one that does not (the latter being connected somehow with phlegm) – so also the residual blood consists of two similar parts. One of these, we are told, is thin, subtle, or rarefied in nature (Pahlavi *bārīg*) and is thus capable of upward motion from the liver to the gall bladder (*zahrag ī azabar jagar bē jahēd. ān ī bārīg ī tēz ul āhangēd*), where it becomes red bile. The other portion, in contrast, is coarse and heavy (Pahlavi *stabrīh*) and thus falls downward to the spleen (*stabrīh ī abāz mānēd frōd ō spul*), where it becomes black bile. These interrelations may be graphed as in Figure 9.3.

Having named the four "essential/maternal fluids" (ZS 30.14), discussed the differences among them (30.15), and their interrelations (30.16), the text now proceeds to consider their unification within a fifth fluid, thus far unnamed.

16 *pēšōbāy az āmēzišnān xōn ō jagar šawēd. ud pas andar ayārdēnišn kōf be sar abganēd enyā cinēd ud be ō drēm guhrāyēnēd. pas zahrag ī azabar jagar bē estēd, ān ī bārīg ī tēz ul āhangēd bē ō wiš ī suxr bawēd, bāstān dahān wišād dārēd. wiš ī suxr abar kumīg rēzēd, ī xwarišn gugārēd, pas stabrīh ī abāz mānēd frōd ō* +*spul* +*abganīhēd bē ō wiš ī syā bawēd.*

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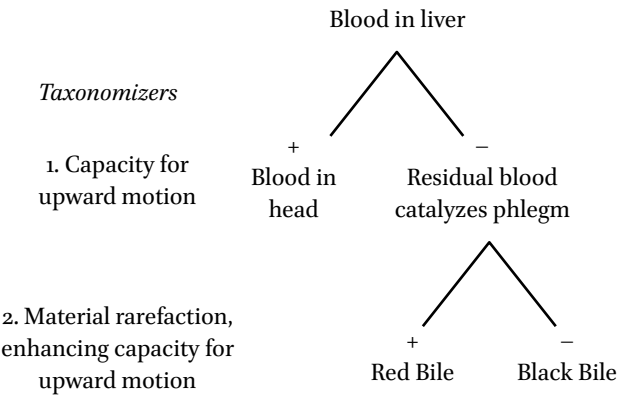

FIGURE 9.3 Interrelations of the Four Humors

> 17. Then, seeds from all four elements, which are in the top of the head, the place of the brain, go to the spinal cord. A libation, made up of all four fluids in proportion to their accomplishments, is drawn back to the head. That bodily being which is gathered up in that libation [comes] from all the body; its essence is made firm and it is poured forth in the form of seed. And from this there is the coming into being and the birth of mortals.[17]

There is much that remains unclear here. One is given no clue as to how the "seeds" (*tōhmagān*) of the four humors come to be in the brain, nor what is meant by the specification that they are joined in a mixture that is somehow "in proportion to their accomplishments (*passāxtīh rāy paymānagīg*). The identity of that mixture, however, is no mystery, for it is nothing other than semen (*tōhm*),[18] here viewed as an aggregate of the four other fundamental

17 *pas az ēn harw 4 āmēzišnān tōhmagān, kē pad bālist <ī> sar, andar mazg gāh, pad ān rahag pad pust abar šawē<n>d. zōhr-ē ī az harw 4 passāxtīh rāy paymānagīg, abāz ō sar āhang<ih>ēd, andar cihrag ōstigān bē kunēd, pad tōhm ēwēnag frāz rēzihēd,* [*uš*] *bawišn ud zayišn ī mardōmān az-iš bawēd.*

Textual notes: Pace Anklesaria and Bailey, the *sar* of MS. BK is preferable to TD's *jagar*. *pad* is omitted in MS. BK. When this is so, *zōhr* functions as the subject of the sentence and the active form of the verb is proper. With *pad* present, however, *tan* becomes the subject and a passive form (**cinihēd*) is required.

18 Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, op cit., vol. 2, p. 194, Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, op cit., pp. 106 and 109. The view advanced by Shaki, "Some Basic Tenets," op cit., pp. 289–91, that *tōhmag* denotes "substance" in a technically Aristotelian sense strikes me as overly restrictive, as do his interpretations of *mādag* (p. 179, n. 15) and *cihr* (p. 303). In stressing the abstract philosophical significance of these terms as they are employed in cosmogonic discussions, Shaki ignores their grounding in the physiology of human reproduction, which – as

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fluids. We are told, moreover, that – apparently as a result of its aggregate nature – semen possesses within itself the very essence of all bodily matter, drawn from all parts of the body (*az hamāg kirb, tan ī pad zōhr ī abar cinēd, andar cihrag ōstigān bē kunēd*), and it is this that makes it capable of producing new life, being in effect a microcosmic version of the body to be created. The "essence" (*cihrag*) contained within semen, moreover, is quite different from that of the four "essential" fluids. For whereas the latter were essential/maternal (*mādagwar*), semen is – of course – "essential/paternal," for *cihrag* means, most literally, "(male) seed."[19]

One further item in ZS 30.17 is noteworthy: the metaphoric description of seminal fluid as a "libation" (*zōhr*) that apparently is poured forth from its place of origin in the brain, through the spinal cord, down to the reproductive organs.[20] In this fashion, the attempt is made to associate a physiological process – albeit one that is misunderstood by our standards – to a ritual action that is viewed as being no less creative: the pouring of libation offerings into the sacrificial fire.[21] Sexual reproduction is thus presented as a sacred action, in which the male role – nothing similar is said of the female – is akin to that of the priest who presents a libation offering. This is the first point at which the text moves beyond its consideration of strictly physiological entities and processes, relating this area of concern to another, that of social relations. Of this, there is more to come.

> 18. These four elements, which are different in their nature and different in that which they do, [are like] the four social classes, which are the Priest, who is a teacher; the Warrior, who is a fighter; the Pastoralist-Agriculturalist, who is a table-servant; and the Artisan, who is a menial-servant.[22]

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some of the texts he cites make clear – provided a model of cosmogonic processes (cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 1.58 [TD^2 MS 16.1–9] and *Dēnkard* 3.194 {MS B, ed. Dresden, 161.16–163.2], cited at pp. 310 and 281–83, respectively).

19 Mackenzie, *Concise Dictionary of Pahlavi*, op cit., p. 22, Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, op cit., vol. 2, p. 55 (under *cihr*). Mackenzie, apparently following Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961 [orig. 1904]), cols. 586–87, differentiates two homographic Pahlavi terms ^{1}*cihr* (derived from Avestan ^{1}*ciϑra-*) "form, shape, appearance, face," and ^{2}*cihr* (from Avestan ^{2}*ciϑra-*) "seed, origin, nature, essence," *cihrag* being derived from the latter.

20 See further Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Le X^{v}arənah," *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli, Sezione Linguistica* 5 (1963): 19–31, esp. pp. 25–26.

21 On sacrifice as *the* quintessentially creative act, see Marijan Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963).

22 *4 ān āmēzišn <ān> ī jud-cihrag jud-kār bē ō 4 pēšag <ī> mardōm ī hēnd hammōzgār āsrōn ud zadār artēštār ud $^+$frawārdār wāstaryōš* [*ud*] *paristār $^+$hutuxš.*

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Here, the four humors are correlated to the old Iranian social system of four hierarchically differentiated classes based upon occupation, which are also organized in a hierarchic set.[23] No argument is advanced for a relation of analogy or homology between specific classes and corresponding humors, although with some difficulty, elements of such an argument might be inferred.[24] Instead of focusing on any perceived or imagined similarities between a given fluid and a correlated social class, however, the text is at pains to compare the hierarchic *system* under which two sets are organized. The correspondences as set forth in the text are in Table 9.3.

TABLE 9.3 Correlations between the four humors and the four social classes

Rank	Fluid	Social Class	Activity
1	Blood	Priests	Teaching
2	Phlegm	Warriors	Fighting
3	Red Bile	Pastoralists and Agriculturalists	Serving Food
4	Black Bile	Artisans	Menial Service

Textual notes: reading †*frawārdār* for *frawardār*. Parallelism requires a connective particle between *wāstaryōš* and *paristār*, since the bipartite designators of the other three classes (action-describer plus formal title) are all separated by *ud*. The TD MS contains an error, with the *ud* preceding *wāstaryōš* instead of following it.

23 The classic works on the ancient Iranian social order remain Georges Dumézil, "La préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes," *Journal asiatique* 216 (1930): 109–30, Émile Benveniste, "Les classes sociales dans la tradition avestique, *Journal asiatique* 221 (1932): 117–34, and idem, "Traditions indo-iraniennes sur les classes sociales," *Journal asiatique* 230 (1938): 529–49. See also Bruce Lincoln, *Priests, Warriors, and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 134–39.

24 This is easier as one moves toward the bottom of both hierarchic sets, for just as two types of bile occupy the third and fourth positions within the system of four humors, so two types of servant are similarly placed within the social order. And just as the higher type of bile is concerned with the digestion of food (ZS 30.16), so the higher type of servant – the pastoralist-agriculturalist, whose chief activity is the production of food in its animal and vegetable forms – is called a *frawārdār*, a "servant" from the verb *frawārdan* "to serve," with particular reference to the presentation of meals. For its part, *paristār*, the term used for the activity of the artisan class, is derived from the verb *paristīdan* "to serve, to worship," and denotes not so much a specific activity as the enormous gulf that separates this kind of servant from the one who is served. Correlations between the upper two classes and the upper two humors are more difficult (if not impossible) to establish and the text wisely makes no such attempt.

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Representation of the social order as if it were but one example of a pattern also encountered in the natural world is quite common in Iranian texts, as in those of many other peoples.[25] As such, it is a classic means of legitimating rigidly hierarchic and exploitative systems, the contingent natures of which are masked as they are made to appear but one expression among many of a natural – and therefore incontestable, immaleable, and perhaps even divine – order. Having thus dealt with the social order, the text concludes with a brief (albeit pointed) discussion of the central political institution in ancient Iran.

> 19. Semen is above those four [fluids] as the king is above the [four] classes.[26]

That this is the key point, toward which the entire discourse was structured, is signalled by the fact that the opening words of this sentence were written in red ink in one of the two surviving manuscripts of *Zād Spram*. Discussion of bodily fluids, far from being a topic of purely intrinsic interest, provided also the means to make a point more sociopolitical than physiological.[27] For we are told that just as semen is a master fluid, in which the others unite, making possible the (re-)production of life, so the king stands above the social classes, uniting all of them in his very being, and it is he who makes possible the ongoing life of society. Moreover, a subtle point of gender politics is also advanced, for just as the four "essential/maternal" (*mādagwar*) fluids, which all have their origin in the lower parts of the body, were set in contrast to the unique "essential/paternal" (*cihrag*) semen, which has its origin in the brain, so the king stands apart from and above (*abar*) his people, with whom he may enter into fruitful relations, if the text is to be believed, but only as the dominant – i.e. male – partner. These relations are graphed in Figure 9.4.

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25 In *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), I studied this pattern among the literatures of peoples speaking Indo-European languages. While common enough in this culture area, this ideological and rhetorical style is hardly unique to them. Cf. the brief but insightful remarks of William J. Goode, *The Celebration of Heroes: Prestige as a Control System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 147.

26 *TŌHMAG ABAR awēšān ciyōn* $^{+}$*šahryār abar 4 pēšagān*.

Textual notes: *TŌHMAG ABAR*: In MS BK, these words are written in red ink.

27 One ought not, however, unduly and anachronistically dichotomize these two discursive spheres. Discussions on the interrelation of the individual body and that of the body politic (or social body) continues well into the early modern period. See, inter alia, the classic work of Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

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Semen : Four Humors ::

King : Four Classes ::

Male : Female ::

Head : Torso

FIGURE 9.4
Concluding analogies as presented in *Zād Spram* 30.14–19

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CHAPTER 10

Embryological Speculation and Gender Politics in a Pahlavi Text

In addition to the passage discussed in the previous chapter, physiological and sociopolitical discourses merge and interpenetrate in many other Pahlavi texts, as for instance, those where the nature of conception, the supreme mystery of the origins of life, is at issue.[1] Let us consider one such text in detail, the *Indian Bundahišn* 16.1–6, which begins as follows.[2]

> 1. Regarding the nature of birth, it is said in the Religion: From the time a woman comes forth from her menses until ten days and nights (have elapsed), men go to her before she becomes pregnant. 2. When she is clean from her menses and it is time for her to become pregnant, whenever the man's seed is more powerful, then there is a son. When the woman's seed is more powerful, then there is a daughter. And when the two seeds are equal, then twins and triplets come into being.[3]

The text begins by differentiating between those times when sexual intercourse will result in conception and those when it will not, specifying ten days after the cessation of menstrual bleeding as the fertile period. No attempt is

1 This chapter was originally published in *History of Religions* 27 (1988): 355–365.

2 My translation is based on the text extablished by Ferdinand Justi, *Der Bundehesh, zum ersten Male herausgegeben* (Leipzig: Strauss & Cramer, 1868), p. 38, line 12 to p. 39, line 13. The corresponding passage of the *Greater Bundahišn* is extremely close (the few minor variants have been noted), but contains two long and intrusive excurses, dealing primarily with the reproductive processes of various animal species (GBd. 15.1–3 and 15.8–16). These excurses are signaled at the start of the chapter by insertion of the phrase *abar zāyišnān ī az harw sardag* "Regarding the nature of *the births of every species*," where the *Indian Bundahišn* has only *abar zāyišnīh* "Regarding the nature of birth." English translations of these passages are available in E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Oress, 1880), vol. 1, pp. 60–61 and B.T. Anklesaria, *Zand-Akāsih: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn* (Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956). pp. 139–43.

3 *abar ciyōnīh <ī> zāyišnīh gōwēd pad dēn kū: zan ka az daštān bē āyēd tā 10 rōz sab, ka-š ō šawēnd pēš ābustan bawēd. ka-š az daštān šust ēstēd ka ābustan zamān* [$^{+}$*ka*] *estēd. hamē ka tōhm ī mard nērōgōmandtar pus, ka ān ī zan nērōgōmandtar duxt, ka harw 2 rāst tōhm 2-gānag ud 3-gānag az-aš bawēd.*

Textual notes: *zāyišnīh*: GBd has *zāyišnān ī az harw sardag*, as noted above. *āyēd*: GBd has *šāyēd*. *ō šawēnd*: GBd has *ō nazdīkīh šawēnd*, "they go *near to* her," a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

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made, however, to establish why this is so. Rather, it is simply asserted as a fact, after which the discussion moves to differentiate those pregnancies that result in the birth of a boy from those that produce a girl and to offer a causal explanation for this bifurcation. Thus, it states that whereas a male child follows from an act of insemination in which the seed (*tōhm*) supplied by the father is somehow "more powerful" (*nērōgōmandtar*) than that of the mother, conversely a female child is conceived through the opposite state of affairs. Sexual union and conception thus involve a test of sorts, in which the seeds of the parents vie quite literally to "overpower" each other, with the gender identity of the resulting child as the prize in this contest. Within the logic of this explanatory system, there remains one final possibility, i.e. the case in which the seeds of both parents are precisely equal in power. Such an eventuality, it is maintained, results in the phenomenon of multiple births.[4] The three logical possibilities entertained within this system are as presented in Figure 10.1.

It should be noted that no inherent superiority in "power" is attributed to either male or female seed and although the text is silent in this regard, it might be assumed from the fact that female births are approximately equal to male in number, that female seed must therefore be more powerful than male in about 50% of all conceptions and vice versa. This apparent egalitarianism is, however, belied by the next portion of the text.

> 3. If the man's seed comes first, it grows in the woman and she becomes stout [i.e. pregnant]. If the woman's seed comes first, it turns to blood and the woman is thereby weakened [i.e. she does not conceive, but menstruates].[5]

Male seed more powerful	→	Birth of male child
Female seed more powerful	→	Birth of female child
Both seeds equal in power	→	Birth of twins, triplets

FIGURE 10.1 The role of gender in conception according to *Indian Bundahišn* 16.2

4 The problematics of gender are not pursued here. One might, e.g., expect hermaphroditic or asexual children to result from parental seeds of equal power, given the logic of the system. It would seem that twins of opposite sexes, i.e. a situation in which precise gender balance is maintained, were taken as the paradigm of all multiple births, so that the text is spared the difficulty (and embarrassment) of working out the causal factors that result in the birth of same-sex triplets, e.g.

5 *agar tōhm ī nar pēš āyēd ō mādag abzāyēd, uš frabīh bawēd. agar tōhm ī mādag pēš āyēd xōn bawēd, mādag az-aš nizārihēd.*

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Whereas the preceding verse seemed to establish a rough equality of the two seeds, each of which could produce a child of its own gender when present in a form "more powerful" (*nērōgōmandtar*) than its counterpart, this verse is at pains to assert the superior nature of the male seed. In order to do so, it employs the imagery of sequential order, for more is apparently necessary for conception to occur than an act of correctly timed parental intercourse. In addition, it is asserted, the male seed must arrive first (presumably at the womb; alternatively, it might be that male orgasm must precede female). The primacy of male seed – in temporal terms, rather than those of relative "power" – is thus established as a necessary precondition for any birth, since only when male seed comes first is life possible. Figure 10.1 must be modified accordingly (see Table 10.1).

These points established, the text moves on to consider the essential and contrasting natures of the two gender-specific seeds.

> 4. Women's seed is cold and moist and its flow is from the ribs; its color is red and yellow. Men's seed is warm and dry and its flow is from the brain. Its color is white and dark.[6]

TABLE 10.1 The role of gender in conception according to *Indian Bundahišn* 16.1–3

	Male seed first	**Female seed first**
Male seed more powerful	Birth of male child	NO
Female seed more powerful	Birth of female child	BIRTH
Seeds equal in power	Birth of twins, triplets	POSSIBLE

Textual notes: GBd inserts *pīh bawād* "it would become fat" between *āyēd* and *ō*, thus specifying that it is the male seed that actually grows and causes pregnancy.

6 *tōhm ī mādag sard ud xwēd, tazišn az pahlūg ud gōnag* [*spēd*] *suxr ud zard. tōhm ī narān garm ud hušk, tazišn az mazg ī sar, gōnag spēd ud xašēn.*

Textual notes: *spēd* is lacking in the corresponding passage of the *Greater Bundahišn* (TD^2 MS 110.3). Its presence here seems to be a scribal error, since it disrupts the logic of the analysis. *ud xašēn* is omitted in the *Greater Bundahišn* (TD^2 MS 110.5), physiological observation prevailing over schematic representations and white semen only being recognized. Since all

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Male and female seed are thus differentiated, first on the basis of four physical properties: warmth, cold, moisture, and dryness. Far from being chosen at random, these properties are of fundamental importance in Zoroastrian thought. For as is evident in numerous other sources, moisture and warmth are considered to be inherently Ohrmazdian in nature: that is, they are beneficent and sustaining of life. Conversely, dryness and cold are Ahrimanian, characteristic of death and stagnation. These Ahrimanian properties, however, on closer analysis are less categories of being than of nonbeing, for they are in essence nothing other than the negation of their Ohrmazdian counterparts – cold being the absence of warmth and dryness that of moisture.[7] Male seed is thus characterized by the presence of warmth and the absence of moisture, while female seed is just the reverse, as is shown in Table 10.2.

It is thus clear that the two seeds – one of which possesses warmth but lacks moisture, while other possesses moisture while lacking warmth – are morally ambiguous mixtures of Ohrmazdian and Ahrimanian properties and accordingly, neither one is capable of creating and sustaining life by itself.[8] Rather, the union of the two fluids is necessary for procreation to occur, so that each may thereby obviate the other's lack. Conception via sexual union is thus represented as a classically dialectic process, in which two opposite entities confront one another and generate a third, different from either of its antecedents but derivative of both, as shown in Table 10.3.

TABLE 10.2 Classification of the two gendered seeds according to the presence or absence of moisture and warmth according to *Indian Bundahišn* 16.4

	+Moisture	**–Moisture**
+Warmth		Male Seed
–Warmth	Female Seed	

manuscripts preserve two colors of female seed (red and yellow), it seems likely that male seed – which balances female in all other respects – also had two colors attributed to it.

7 See, for example, *Greater Bundahišn* 28.12, *Zād Spram* 30.15, *Dēnkard* 3.105, 123, 162, and 390, and the discussion of Mansour Shaki, "Some Basic Tenets of the Eclectic Metaphysics of the *Dēnkart*," *Archiv Orientálni* 38 (1970): 295–96.

8 Note that the existence of an unambiguously Ohrmazdian sexual fluid (i.e. +Warmth/+Moisture) is not entertained by the text, nor is one that would be unambiguously Ahrimanian (–Warmth/–Moisture).

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TABLE 10.3 Interaction of the two seeds in conception according to *Indian Bundahišn* 16.4

	Moisture	Warmth
Male Seed (Thesis)	–	+
Female Seed (Antithesis)	+	–
Union of the Two (Synthesis)	+	+

As for classification of the seeds by color, the text implies that female seed, being red *and* yellow, includes, but is not limited to menstrual blood,[9] while male seed similarly includes, but is not limited to semen, insofar as it is white *and* dark.[10] Presumably, pains are being taken here to avoid a straightforward identification of female seed with blood, for the latter fluid is elsewhere said to be both warm and moist: that is to say, wholly Ohrmazdian and capable of sustaining life in and of itself (*Zād Spram* 30.15). By assigning two colors to each seed, the text avoids this pitfall, while also correlating the two seeds to the four humors, for through their color codings, each seed is brought into association with one benign humor (female to [red] blood, male to [white] phlegm) and one that is destructive or poisonous (female to that bile which is "variable from red to yellow,"[11] and male to black bile).

Beyond their differing physical properties, the two seeds are also said to have their origin in different parts of the body. Thus, we are told that while female seed flows from the ribs, male seed flows from the brain and the means whereby the latter makes its way from the brain to the testicles via the spinal column is spelled out in a number of other sources.[12] More important for our present concerns, however, is the system of vertical relations whereby the male element is set dramatically above the female in a fashion that encodes and represents a social hierarchy.[13]

9 Note also that female seed is said to revert to blood either if conception does not occur or if there is more seed than is necessary for conception (*Indian Bundahišn* 16.3 and 5).

10 This last point is subject to modification if the reading of the *Greater Bundahišn* (see above, note 6).

11 *gōn suxr ō zardīh wardišnīg*, *Zād Spram* 30.15.

12 For example, *Zād Spram* 30.17. See in addition, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Le Xvarənah," *Annali dell' Istituo Orientale di Napoli, Sezione Linguistica* 5 (1963): 19–31, esp. pp. 25–26.

13 Compare *Dēnkard* 3.163, where the king's supremacy to the various priests is asserted by associating the former to the brain and the latter to skinb, flesh, bone, tendon, heart, and liver. On the quasi-universal use of vertical imagery to discuss social hierarchy, see Barry Schwartz, *Vertical Classification* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

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Male : Female ::

Brain : Ribs ::

Above : Below ::

Superior : Subordinate ::

Thought : Body ::

Marrow : Bone ::

Center : Periphery

FIGURE 10.2
Binary contrasts following on the different loci associated with male and female seed in *Indian Bundahišn* 16.4

Association of male seed with the brain further serves to identify males as those who are, *ab origine*, possessed of thought, while conversely thought is identified as something quintessentially male. Also, we must note that in Pahlavi, one word (*mazg*) denotes "brain" and "marrow" alike, the brain being understood as an organ composed entirely of marrow. Marrow, for its part, is viewed as the innermost core of bodily existence, surrounded by bone, which in turn is surrounded by flesh, fat, veins, skin, and hair.[14] In their contrastive original loci (brain and ribs), the two seeds are thus also contrasted as marrow is to bone: the former being that which is absolutely central and the latter, that which is less so. This system of oppositions is mapped out in Figure 10.2.

With this established, the text continues:

> 5. All female seed comes first and holds on in the womb. The male seed is above and makes the place of the womb full. All the [seed] that is superfluous turns back into blood. It goes into the woman's veins and becomes milk in her breasts when the child is born, as all milk comes from men's seed and all blood from that of women.[15]

14 See *Zād Spram* 30.4. When it is necessary to differentiate the brain from marrow in general, the former is reverred to as *mazg ī sar*, "marrow of the head."

15 *hamāg tōhm ī mādagān pēš bē āyēd andar kadag gāh gīrēd, ud tōhm ī narān* $^{+}$*azabar ān bē ēstēd. ān kadag gāh purr bē kunēd. harw cē az-aš bē parrēzēd abāz ō xōn bawēd. pad rag<ān> ī mādagān andar šawēd, pad handām kē bē zāyēd šīr bawēd. uš parwarēd ciyōn hamāg šīr az tōhm ī narān bawēd, xōn ān ī mādagān.*

Textual notes: *kadag gāh*: in both places where this seemingly senseless phrase ("house dwelling"?) recurs, Anklesaria transliterates *kadagīhā*, which is no improvement. The context demands that it be understood for the womb or some part thereof. West translates "womb;" Anklesaria, "fallopian tubes." Could it be a scribal error for *mādag gāh* ("female place")? *gīrēd*: *Greater Bundahišn* has *frāz gardēd*. $^{+}$*azabar ān*: *Greater Bundahišn* has *abar*. *rag<ān> ī mādagān*: *Greater Bundahišn* has the plural, but omits the izafat, thus *ragān mādagān*. *handām kē bē zāyēd*: *Greater Bundahišn* has *handām ī zāyišn*. That this

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Strikingly, this portion of the text openly contradicts a point made only a bit before, where it was claimed that male seed must come first if conception is to result (*Indian Bundahišn* 16.3). The very fact of such a contradiction is itself instructive, however, revealing as it does how little concerned this passage is with the physiology of reproduction in the last analysis. For if it is able to reverse itself on physiological details, it is nonetheless quite consistent in its ideological formulations, which are alternately presented in a code of sequential order and one of vertical relations. Thus, if the present verse negates the earlier specification that male seed must come "first" if there is to be a fruitful conjunction, it replaces that notion with the equally novel, equally fallacious, and equally tendentious idea that male seed sits somehow "above" (*azabar*) the female when the two commingle in the womb.

Equally striking is the discussion of what becomes of that portion of the mixed seed that is superfluous (*harw ce az-aš bē parrēzēd*), that is, what is left over after the foetus has been formed. This excess, we are told, returns to the mother's bloodstream, where at the time of the child's birth, the two gender-specific seeds separate once more, the mother's remaining in the form of blood (perhaps the blood of parturition), while the father's is transformed into milk. Although this line of analysis may have been suggested by the system of color classification that posits (in part) Male : Female :: White : Red, there are serious consequences that follow from it. For when these views are accepted, nourishment – from the moment of birth onward – is identified as a paternal gift and the very milk that flows from a mother's breasts is appropriated by male ideology.

Having pursued its consideration of life's origins from the moment when conception becomes possible through to the feeding of the newborn, the text shifts its focus, moving from an embryological discourse to one that is cosmological.

> 6. These four things are said to be male and female respectively: Sky, metal, wind, and fire come into being as male and never otherwise. Water, earth, plants, and fish come into being as female, and never otherwise. The rest of creation may come into being male and female.[16]

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phrase refers to the breasts is confirmed by a gloss inserted after *šīr*, which reads *abāz pestān āyēd*, "it goes back to the breasts" (TD^2 MS 110.8).

16 *ēn 4 tis nar mādag gowēd asmān ayōxšust wād ātaxš nar hagriz juttar nē bawēd. ān āb ud zamīg ud urwar ud māhīg mādag hagriz juttar nē bawēd. abārīg dahišn nar ud mādag ōh bawēd.*

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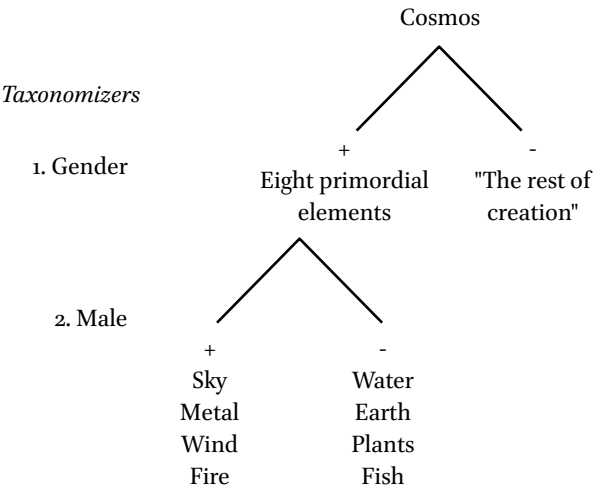

FIGURE 10.3 Classification of the cosmos according to gender in *Indian Bundahišn* 16.6

Here, at the culmination of the entire passage, appears the definitive coding of sex hierarchy, in which the very cosmos is classified according to gender. Two basic distinctions are advanced, the first of which differentiates those that have a fixed gender from those that do not.[17] Of this latter group, nothing further is said, it being no more than the residual class that fills out the taxonomic system. In contrast, all those items that do have gender are individually named as they are divided into the subcategores of male (sky, metal, fire, wind) and female (water, earth, plants, fish), as shown in Figure 10.3.

As always, there is more. For of the eight gender-specific elements that are mentioned here, four recur in the list of "Six Original Creatons" in the *Bundahišn*'s creation account (*Indian Bundahišn* 1.28, *Greater Bundahišn* 1.54). When the two texts are considered together, we find that the first element of creation is male (sky), the second, third, and fourth (water, earth, plants) are female, and the last two (cattle and humanity) lack gender specificity.

17 It is not clear whether we are to understand that the members of the latter group are mixed or variable in gender, although it may be significant that the texts says they "may come into being male *and* female" (*nar* ***ud*** *mādag ōh bawēd*), not "male *or* female" (*nar* **ayab mādag*). This, however, is a less than compelling argument and one might reasonably expect some explicit mention of mixture, given the importance this state has in Zoroastrian theology. Perhaps it is best to leave the question unresolved.

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Further, five of the eight also figure in the set of "Beneficent Immortals" (*Aməša Spəntas*), Zoroastrian divine beings each of whom is associated with one specific element of the created universe. These figures, moreover, are regularly listed in a fixed, canonic order, as follows: (1) Vohu Manah ("Good Thought"), patron of (non-gender-specific) livestock; (2) Aša Vahišta ("Best Truth"), patron of (male) fire; (3) Xšaθra Vairya ("Choice Dominion"), patron of (male) metal; (4) Spənta Armaiti ("Beneficent Devotion"), patroness of the (female) earth; (5) Haurvatāt ("Wholeness"), patron of (female) water; and Amərətāt ("Immortality"), patron of (female) plants. As in the case of the "Six Original Creations," so here, the sequential order encodes gender hierarchy, such that male items always precede female, although non-gender-specific items may come either at the head or the tail of the list.

Just as sequential order encodes hierarchy, so also do vertical relations, as we saw in the embryological discourse of *Indian Bundahišn* 16.1–5. The same holds true in the cosmological discourse of 16.6, for the four creations that are there said to be male are all associated with the above: sky, metal (the substance of which the sky is made, according to the *Bundahišn*),[18] fire (associated above all with the sun), and wind. Conversely, the four female creations are all associated with the below: earth, plants, water, and fish.[19] One can correlate all of these codes – embryological and cosmological, sequential and vertical – in one master list, as in Table 10.4.

This completes the analysis offered by the *Bundahišn* and that which I offer for this rich and complext text, which mixes multiple levels of discourse with equal skill and tendentiousness. In antiquity, as in the present, there are those who maintain that the making of babies is a cosmic and not merely an individual matter; a question of religion, as well as biochemistry. If nothing else, I hope to have demonstrated that speculation on this topic – the origins of life, in the ontogenetic sense – has on occasion been a sociopolitical and gender hierarchic issue as well.

18 *Greater Bundahišn* 1A.6, 3.16, 34.5, etc. Note also *Yašt* 13.2 and the discussion of H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 124–34.

19 Further subclassifications may be suggested here, as the male elements may be divided into the heavenly (sky, metal, fire) and the atmospheric (wind); female elements into the terrestrial (earth, plants) and the aquatic (water, fish).

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TABLE 10.4 Interlocking representations of gender hierarchy in *Indian Bundahišn* 16.1–6

Embryology	Male Seed	Must come first for conception		Flows from brain	Lodges above womb
	Female Seed	Must come second for conception		Flows from ribs	Lodges in womb
Cosmology	Male Elements	Sky first created	Beneficent Immortals #2 and #3 (Fire, Metal)		Locus in the above (Sky, Metal, Fire, Wind)
	Female Elements	Water, earth, plants created 2nd, 3rd, 4th	Beneficent Immortals #4, 5, 6 (Earth, Water, Plants)		Locus in the below (Earth, Plants, Water, Fish)

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CHAPTER 11

Pahlavi *kirrēnīdan* and Traces of Iranian Creation Mythology

Pahlavi contrasts two of the verbs it uses for acts of creation along familiar dualistic lines.[1] The ahuric term, *brēhēnīdan*, replaces Avestan *dā-* and means "to create," "to destine," and "to decree."[2] Generally, it implies that creation takes place by divine fiat, for which no prior material or spiritual being is necessary, save only Ohrmazd himself.[3] In similar fashion, the daēvic term, *kirrēnīdan* carries two different senses.[4] The first of these implies the preexistence of material substance, and conforms to the semantics of its cognates throughout the Indo-European family: Sanskrit *kṛt-*, *kṛntáti*, "to cut, split, rend;" Homeric κείρω, "to shear, clip, cut short (esp. hair);" Old Norse *skera* "to cut, slaughter, carve;" Old High German *scrinden* "to divide, split up;" Russian крою, кроить "to cut out (esp. cloth);" and Old Irish *scara*(*im*) "to separate, remove, cut off."[5] The verb's second semantic domain is unique to Iran, where it also denotes acts through which the Evil Spirit brought loathsome, destructive entities into the world as antagonistic counterparts to Ohrmazd's good creation.

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1 This chapter was originally published in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (1997): 681–685.

2 D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 19, H.S. Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974) 2:49. Although there is no commonly accepted etymology for *brēhēnīdan*, Professors William Malandra and Prods Oktor Skjaervø both suggested to me the possibility that, like Pahl. *brīdan*, it may be derived from Indo-European **bʰr(e)iH-* "to cut off" (Avestan pairi.*brīnaŋha*, Sanskrit *bhrīṇāti*, Russian брить etc.), conceivably by way of Avestan **brōiϑra-*, attested in the compound *brōiϑrō.taēža-* "with sharp blade" (personal communications, January and February 1997). See further, Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1992–) 2:282, Idem, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindisches* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1956–76) 2:532–533, and Herman Lommel, "Kleine Beiträge zur arischen Sprachkunde: Arisch *bhrīṇāti*," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 50 (1922): 271–275.

3 H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 96.

4 MacKenzie, p. 51, Nyberg, 2:118, and the glossary to A.V. Williams, ed. & trans., *The Pahlavi Rivayat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy, 1990), Vol. 1, p. 315.

5 T.V. Gamkrelidze and V.V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995) 1:612, Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* 1:315–316. The reconstructed root is PIE **skʰer-*, which may be modified by nasal and other suffixes.

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> When he saw the light of Ohrmazd, intangible and shining forth, due to his envious nature and desire to smite, [the Evil Spirit] made an attack to destroy it. Then he saw bravery and triumph that were greater than his own, and he scurried back to the darkness. He (mis-)created [*kirrēnīd*] many demons, a creation of destruction that was needed for battle.[6]
>
> Out of material darkness, which is his own body, the Evil Spirit (mis-)created [*kirrēnīd*] his creation in the form of blackness, the color of ashes, worthy of darkness, false like the most evil-bringing vermin.[7]
>
> The Evil Spirit, in the quality of the adversary, among the chief demons (mis-)created [*kirrēnīd*] first Akoman, then Indra, Saurva, Nahaithya, Taromand, Taric and Zaric, then the other demons.[8]

In the Avesta, the verb *kart-*, from which *kirrēnīdan* is derived, usually denotes simple acts of cutting.[9] In one formulaic phrase, however, it describes an act of demonic creation, when Aži Dahāka is named "the very most powerful lie the Evil Spirit created (*kərəntat*) against the embodied creation, for the destruction of the creations of truth."[10]

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6 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.16–17 (TD² MS. 4.9–14): *ka-š dīd ān ī Ohrmazd rošnīh agriftār ud frāz-payrōg zadār-kāmagīh arešk-gōhrīh rāy pad murnjēnīdan tag abar kard. u-š pas dīd cīrīh ud abarwēzīh ī frēh az ān ī xwēš abāz ō tom dwārist. kirrēnīd was dēw*[*ān*] *ān dām ī murnjēnīdār niyāz ō ardīkkarīh*. With one exception (*frāz-payrōg* for his *frāz padirōt*), I have followed the text extablished by R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvān: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 279, with notes at pp. 290–291.

7 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.47 (TD² MS. 11.10–12)*: Gannāg Mēnōg az gētīg tārīgīh ān ī xwēš tan* [*ī*] *dām frāz kirrēnīd pad ān ī kirb ī syāīh ī ādurestar-*$^{+}$*gōn ī tom-arzānīg druwand ciyōn bazag-adēntar xrafstar*.

8 Greater Bundahišn 1.55 (TD² MS. 15.7–10): *Gannāg Mēnōg pad ān petyāragōmandīh az kamālīgn dēwān nazdist akōman frāz kirrēnīd pas andar ud pas sāwul pas nāhagīh pas tarōmad pas taric ud zaric pas abārīgān dēwān*.

9 Thus, for example, it is used for cutting in a surgical context at *Vīdaēuudāt* 7.37–38; in a martial context in *Yašt* 10.72 and 14.62; and in the context of post mortem punishments in *Vīdaēuudāt* 4.50.

10 *Yasna* 9.8 (= *Yašt* 5.34, 9.14, 14.40, 17.34, and 19.37): *aš.aojastəmąm drujim fraca kərəntat aŋrō mainyuš aoi yąm astvaitīm gaēϑąm mahrkāi ašahe gaēϑanąm*. Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuc*h (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961), col. 453, took *Vīdaēuudāt* 22.1–2 to contain two cosmogonic usages of *kart-*, once (with the preverb *ā-*) for an Ohrmazdean act of creation, and once (with *frā-*) for its Ahrimanian counterpart. This has been rejected by Jean Kellens, however, who takes these as instances of *kar-* ("to make"), rather than kart-, *Le verbe avestique* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1984), p. 171 n. 4 and 5. As Kellens observes elsewhere (p. 17, n. 4), careful analysis is made particularly difficult by the fact that "Toutes les formes de *kart* sont corrompues et la tradition manuscrite n'ouvre la voie à aucune correction."

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Here, as in the case of Avestan *taš-* and *θbarəs-*,[11] an Iranian verb most concretely associated with acts of scission expands its semantic range into the field of creative action, a development that presumes a view of creation as a cutting of sorts: conceivably an artisanal, sculptural, surgical, martial, or sacrificial act. Vedic evidence could support the last two of these alternatives, since the verb *kṛt-* is twice used for heroic deeds with cosmogonic aspects, and once for the dismemberment of animals.[12] The latter occurrence holds particular interest.

> What dereliction, O Agni, what fault did you commit among the gods? Now I, unknowing, ask you.
> In order to eat, the golden, toothless one – playing and not-playing – cut apart [*ví … cakarta*] [the wood] limb by limb, just as a knife [cuts apart] the ox.[13]

Here, it is worth noting that the kind of knife specified – Vedic *así-*, cognate to Latin *ensis*, "sword"[14] – is not usually a ritual instrument.[15] Indeed, at times it appears to be the very antithesis of the tools that by their purity recode the violence of sacrifice as a sacred action. Thus, the passage just quoted playfully describes the way fire splits wood as a kind of ritual fault (*énas-*). More striking still is a verse addressed to the sacrificial horse just prior to its offering.

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11 See the discussion of Manfred Mayrhofer, "Über Kontaminationen der indoiranischen Sippen von ai. *takṣ-*, *tvakṣ-*, **tvarś-*," in *Indo-Iranica: Mélanges présentés à Georg Morgenstierne* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964), pp. 141–148.

12 Eight occurences of *kṛt-* are listed in Hermann Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1873), p. 346, most with the preverb *vi-* or *niṣ-*. Two combine martial and cosmogonic resonance, describing Indra's liberation of sun and waters from mountain fastholds (RV 1.57.6 and 10.67.5).

13 RV 10.79.6: *kíṃ devéṣu tyája énaś cakarthâgne pṛcchâmi nú tvâm ávidvān / ákrīḍan krīḍan hárir áttave 'dán ví parvaśáś cakarta gâm ivāsíḥ //*

14 Comparison to Avestan *aŋhū-* is still advocated by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, p. 643 and by older reference works, but is difficult to reconcile with William Malandra's identification of the *aŋhū-* as a bow, not a sword, "A Glossary of Terms for Weapons and Armor in Old Iranian," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4 (1973), pp. 268–269. As a result, it has been abandoned by Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* 1:145, in contrast to the position he took in *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* 1:64.

15 There is only one RV occurrence in which *así-* appears in a ritual context, and even that exceptional case is revealing, for the sacrifice in question is something of an anti-sacrifice: the offering of a large forest animal (*párasvān-*, identified as a donkey by Grassmann and a rhinoceros by Lüders) in the wild, as a means of redressing a brahmacarin's breach of chastity (RV 10.86.18, on which see Geldner's note, *Der Rigveda* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Oriental Series, 1951] vol. 3, pp. 276–277). AV 9.5.4 is also relevant.

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> Let not your own self torment you as you enter, let not the axe cause harm to your body.
> Let not a hasty, unskilled dismemberer proceed incorrectly and do wrong to your broken limbs with a knife [*así-*].[16]

Although Pahlavi sources do not use *kirrēnīdan* for deeds of a heroic and cosmogonic nature, there is a passage where it appears not just in the general context of sacrifice, but in a sacrifice marked by grave faults regarding the dismemberment and distribution of the victim's body.

> The god Haoma makes a curse on a person. He says: "May you have no child, and may you have an evil reputation and other evils of your own, you who do not order that a sacrifice be made to me with the portion my father, Ohrmazd assigned to me: that is, the jaw, together with the tongue, and the left eye of all animals and animal species. You do not sacrifice; rather, you just gobble it up. He who does not offer the portion Ohrmazd assigned to me, but gobbles it up, let not a priest, warrior, or herdsman-pastoralist be born in his house. People of the line of sorcerers will be born in his house. He damages Ohrmazd's creation, that *kirrēnīdār* who destroys things."[17]

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16 *mâ tvā tapat priyá ātmâpiyántam mâ svádhitis tanvà a tiṣṭhipat te /*
mâ te grdhnúr aviśastâtihâya chidrâ gâtrāṇy asínā míthū kaḥ //

On this verse, see the notes of Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pâninéennes*, Vol. 16 (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1967), p. 87. It should be understood as the negative counterpart of the proper sacrificial procedures described in RV 1.162.18, where the *así-* is strikingly absent.

The axe arrives at the thirty-four ribs of the horse, the steed bound to the gods.

Put the unbroken limbs in order. Dismember them, proclaiming their names joint by joint.

cátustriṃśad vājíno devábandhor váṅkrīr áśvasya svádhitiḥ sám eti /
áchidrā gâtrā vayúnā kṛṇota páruṣ-parur anughúṣya ví śasta //

17 *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 26.4: *ud hōm yazad ō kas rāy nifrīn kunēd. gōwēd kū-t frazand ma bawād u-t dusrawīh ud abārīg anāgīh xwēš bawād kē man andar yazišn kār nē framāyē ud sūr ī pid Ohrmazd bē ō man dād ērwārag abāg uzwān ud cašm ī hōy ī hamāg gōspand ud gōspand sardagān. nē yazē bē jōyē kē ān sūr ī pid ī man Ohrmazd bē ō man dād nē yazēd bē jōyēd andar mān ī ōy nē zāyēd nē āsrōn nē artēštār ud nē wāstaryōš. ud andar mān ī ōy zāyēnd mardōm ī cihr ī jādūgān ud wināhēd dahišn ī Ohrmazd kirrēnīdār ī tis tabāh kunēd*. This passage follows the Avestan of Y. 11.4–6, but the phrase *kirrēnīdār ī tis tabāh kunēd* corresponds to no Avestan original. Rather, it reflects the Pahlavi gloss to Y. 11.4, where Avestan *mūrakāca* is interpreted as *mūdag-kardār, kū tis tabāh be kunād* ("maker of destruction; that is, he would make things ruined").

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Here, the agent noun *kirrēnīdār* denotes a man who, like the Greek *mageiros*, has the ritual responsibility of dismembering the sacrificial victim's body and distributing its pieces. The *kirrēnīdār* in question, however, is guilty of a ritual error so serious that it transforms his status from a blessed, righteous, and truthful man (Pahl. *ahlaw*) into the opposite: a cursed follower of the Lie (*druwand*).[18] His error consists of failing to give the god Haoma his rightful portion, the significance of which becomes apparent when one realizes that jaw, tongue, and eye are the organs of speech and vision, defining powers of the priestly class. Consigning these pieces to Haoma confirms his status as priest of the gods,[19] while failure to do so is not only a slight to his dignity, but a threat to all priests and the sacrifice itself. The god's curse on [mis-]sacrificers who short him in this fashion thus disrupts reproduction of the proper social order within their family line, and gives them a progeny that is the very antithesis of a priest's: "Let not a priest, warrior, or herdsman-pastoralist be born in his house. People of the line of sorcerers [*cihr ī jādūgān*] will be born in his house."

Beyond its social dimensions, proper sacrificial practice is also expected to renew the cosmos, translating matter from the victim's body into corresponding portions of the physical universe. And within the system of homologies connecting micro- and macrocosm that is familiar from other Pahlavi sources, the specification that Haoma receives the left, but not the right eye, suggests a broader set of associations.[20]

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18 On the *mageiros*, see Guy Berthiaume, *Les rites du mageiros: études sur la boucherie, la cuisine, et le sacrifice dans la Grèce ancienne* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982). One is particularly reminded of the "bad *mageiros*" described by Plato, *Phaedrus* 265e, who provides a negative model for the science of dialectics by dividing the sacrificial victim in a clumsy and destructive manner, breaking its bones instead of severing them neatly at the joints. Further on the significance of sacrificial dismemberment in classical antiquity, see the essays collected in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne, eds., *La cuisine du sacrifice* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979) and Cristiano Grottanelli and Niccola Parisi, eds., *Sacrificio e società nel mondo antico* (Rome: Laterza, 1988).

19 Mary Boyce, "Haoma, priest of the sacrifice," in *W.B. Henning Memorial Volume* (London: Lund, Humphries, 1970), pp. 62–80.

20 See, for example, *Greater Bundahišn* 28, *Zād Spram* 30.4–11, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 46. The connection of the two eyes to sun and moon is made at *Greater Bundahišn* 28.4. On the association of haoma and moon, see Herman Lommel, "König Soma," *Numen* 2 (1955): 196–205, idem, "Mithra und das Stieropfer," *Paideuma* 3 (1944–49): 207–218, Gherardo Gnoli, "Questioni sull' interpretazione della dottrina gathica," *Annali dell' Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 31 (1971): 353–355. Also implicit is a homology sun : moon :: humans : cattle, which gets attention in Chapter Eleven.

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Left eye : Right eye
Moon : Sun
Haoma : Fire

Under this logic, the conjunction of haoma and fire, the two chief items of Zoroastrian ritual, restores the primordial unity that was sundered in acts of sacrificial/cosmogonic cutting. Not only does it create the conjuncture necessary for the sustenance of creation, joining fire's heat to haoma's moisture,[21] it also unites categories of time and space (sun plus moon, day plus night), and establishes the basis for a wisdom that is synthetic, balanced and whole (right eye plus left), instead of analytic, partial and fragmented.

One last piece of information helps us make sense of how *kirrēnīdan* became a verb of creation and miscreation. This is the identity of the mythic figure who consistently appears as the verb's object.

> [In pursuit of Yima's glory], they sent forth whoever was fastest. The Beneficent Spirit sent forth Good Mind, Best Truth, and Fire, the son of Ahura Mazdā. The Evil Spirit sent forth Evil Mind, Wrath of the bloody club, Aži Dahâka, and Yima-cutting [*yimō.kərəṇtəm*] Spityura.[22]
>
> Together with [Až ī] Dahāg, Spityura was the one who cut apart [*kirrēnīd*] Yima.[23]
>
> Yima showed contempt for Ohrmazd, saying "Astwihād [i.e. death] will not come for me." And as a result of that contempt, demons and men cut him apart [*kirrēnīd*].[24]

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21 Two paired categories are theorized here: hot and cold, moist and dry. In each pair, the former member is understood as life-sustaining, the latter as life-negating, and the latter is simply the absence of the former. Fire is thus coded as +Heat/–Moisture and Haoma as –Heat/+Moisture. When the two are ritually united, the positive categories obviate their negative counterparts, resulting in an ideal mix: +Heat/+Moisture. See further Chapters Nine and Ten and such texts as *Dēnkard* 3.105, 3.194; *Greater Bundahišn* 26.127 and 27.52.

22 *Yašt* 19.46: *aδāt ašte fraŋharəcayat āsište katarascit. spəntō mainyuš aštəm fraŋharəcayat vohuca manō ašəmca vahištəm atrəmca ahurahe mazdå puϑrəm. aŋrō mainyuš aštəm fraŋharəcayat akəmca manō aēšəməmca xrvī.drūm ažīmca dahākəm spityurəmca yimō.kərəṇtəm. Dēnkard* 9.21.2 also states that the twentieth fargard of the lost Sūdgar Nask told how Dahāka took power from Yima when the latter was cut in two. On Spityura and his role in these narratives, see Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des Iraniens*, (Uppsala: Archives d'études orientales 1917–1934), vol. 2, pp. 52 and 79, and R. von Stackelberg, "Bemerkungen zur persischen Sagengeschichte," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 12 (1898): 230–48, esp. pp. 245–46.

23 *Greater Bundahišn* 35.5 (TD^2 MS. 228.12): *spītur ān bawēd kē abāg dahāg Yam kirrēnīd.*

24 *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 47.8 *Yam Ohrmazd tar menīd kū-m* $^{+}$*Astwihād nē rasēd uš pad ān tarmēnišnīh ēg-išān be kirrēnīd dēwān* [*ud*] *mardōmān.*

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> When he makes the dead stand up, (then) those who violently and secretly cut apart [*kirrēnīd*] Yima and gave him wounds and injuries, they all die, and for three days they lie dead.[25]
>
> When they cut apart [*kirrēnīd*] Yima, the Farnbag fire saved his glory from the hand of [Až ī] Dahāg.[26]
>
> When the liars are brought up from hell, those who cut apart Yima [*Yam-kirrēnidārān*] will fall back to hell in the form of frogs, and be in that place three [days].[27]

The name *Yima*, as has long been known, means "Twin" or "Double" and is cognate to Vedic *Yáma* and Old Norse *Ymir*, being also closely related to the names of other mythic figures who appear in myths of creation through sacrifice (Latin *Remus*, Germanic *Tuisco*).[28] Accordingly, scholars since Hermann Güntert have suggested that in pre-Zoroastrian Iran, it was Yima who played the role of first man, first king, and also first victim in narratives that describe a process of creation through sacrifice; only later was he supplanted by Gayōmard and others.[29]

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25 *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 48.66: *ud ka rist ul ēstēnēd awēšān kē-šān Yam kirrēnīd ud rēš wizēnd wēn-nihān* $^{+}$*anāštīhā bē kunēnd ud awēšān hamāg bē mīrēnd 3 rōz murd nibayēnd.* This passage is quite unclear, particularly in the phrase I read as *rēš wizēnd wēn-nihān* $^{+}$*anāštīhā*. Both Williams and H.K. Mirza, *The Pahlavi Rivâyat Preceding the Dādestān ī Dīnīk* (unpublished London University Ph.D. thesis, 1942) made numerous – and quite different – emendations, and the former went so far as to drop Yima's name, which is attested in all manuscripts.

26 *Greater Bundahišn* 18.10 (TD^2 MS. 124.15–125.1): *ka-šān Yam bē kirrēnīd xwarrah ī Yam az dast ī Dahāg ādur* $^{+}$*farnbag bōzēnīd.*

27 *Zād Spram* 35.46: *ka druwandān az dušox abar āwurd hēnd Yam-kirrēnidārān wazag-kirbīhā abāz ō dušox ōftēnd ud 3 ān gyāg bawēnd.*

28 Tacitus, *Germania* 2, names Tuisco (manuscript variation: *Tuisto*) as the earth-born god (*deum terra editum*) whom the Germans' ancient songs named as father to Mannus (Proto-Germanic **Manwaz*, cognate to Sanskrit *Manu-* and the first element in Avestan Manuš.ciθra-) and their primordial ancestor. His name means "Twin," and is built on the number two; cf. Old Saxon *twisc*, Old High German *zwisc* "*binus, geminus*," Anglo-Saxon *twist* "forked branch; doubled thread." The names Yama and Yima also mean "Twin," and are derived from **yemo-*, which yields *geminus* in Latin, with mutation of the initial consonant. Elsewhere I have argued that a different mutation, produced by assimilation to the names of Romulus and Roma, gave rise to the name of Remus, one of Rome's primordial twins. See, however, the critical views of T.P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

29 Hermann Güntert, *Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923), pp. 315–343. The large body of relevant literature includes Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi*, op cit., esp. Vol. 2, Aram Frenkian, "Puruṣa – Gayōmard – Anthropos,"

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Such a view finds support in and helps to explain the peculiar semantics of *kirrēnīdan*, a verb that denoted cutting, carving, or splitting apart with a blade, and could be used for sacrificial dismemberment within the context of ritual practice and/or that of creation myths. When these myths and practices fell into disfavor, however – conceivably as a result of Zarathustra's denunciation of Yima (Y. 32.8)[30] – the cosmogonic tradition was reformulated in various ways. Sometimes Yima was forgotten, in which case the Evil Spirit became the subject and focus of a creative action that was condemned as monstrous and

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Revue des études indo-européennes 3 (1943): 118–131, R.N. Dandekar, "Yama in the Veda," in D.R. Bhandarkar, ed., *B.C. Law Volume* (Calcutta: Bhandarkar Oriental Series, 1945), Vol. 1, pp. 194–209, A.W. Macdonald, "A propos de Prajâpati," *Journal asiatique* 240 (1953): 323–328, Walter Burkert, "Caesar und Romulus-Quirinus," *Historia* 11 (1962): 356–376, Hoang-son Hoang-šy-Quy, "Le mythe indien de l'homme cosmique dans son contexte culturel et dans son évolution," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 175 (1969): 133–154, Alfred Ebenbauer, "Ursprungsglaube, Herrschergott und Menschenopfer: Beobachtungen zum Semnonenkult," in M. Mayrhofer, et al., eds., *Antiquitates Indogermanicae: Gedenkschrift für Hermann Güntert* (Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 1974), pp. 233–249, Jaan Puhvel, "Remus et Frater," *History of Religions* 15 (1975): 146–157, Cristiano Grottanelli, "Cosmogonia e sacrificio," *Studi Storico-religiosi* 4 (1980): 207–235 and 5 (1981): 173–196, Geo Widengren, "Macrocosmos-Microcosmos," *Archivio di Filosofia* 1 (1980): 297–312, Jean Kellens, "Yima, magicien entre les dieux et les hommes," *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemin emerito oblata* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), pp. 267–281, idem, "Yima et la mort," in M.A. Jazayery and W. Winter, eds., *Languages and Cultures: Studies in Honor of Edgar Polomé* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988), pp. 329–334, Shaul Shaked, "First man, first king: notes on Semitic-Iranian syncretism and Iranian mythological transformations," in S. Shaked et al., eds., *Gilgul: Essays ... in the History of Religions dedicated to R.J. Zwi Werblowsky* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), pp. 238–256, and my own works, *Priests, Warriors, and Cattle* (Berekeley: University of California Press, 1981), *Myth, Cosmos, and Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Yašt 19.30–39, *Vīdaēuudāt*. 2.20–42.

30 For various interpretations of *Yasna* 32.8, see Helmut Humbach, "Zur altiranische Mythologie," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107 (1957): 362–371, idem, "Methodologische Variationen zur arischen Religionsgeschichte," in M. Mayrhofer, et al., eds., *Antiquitates Indogermanicae: Gedenkschrift für Hermann Güntert*, op cit., pp. 193–200, Marijan Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 222–226, Ilya Gershevitch, "Yima's Beef-Plea," in G. Gnoli and L. Lanciotti, eds., *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il medio ed estremo Oriente, 1977), Vol. 2, pp. 487–499, Stanley Insler, *The Gāthās of Zarathustra* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 204–205, and Jean Kellens and Eric Pirart, *Les textes vieil-avestiques* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1988–91), Vol. 3, pp. 86–87. More broadly, on the topic of animal sacrifice in Zoroastrian practice, see Helmut Humbach, "Zarathustra und die Rinderschlachtung," *Wort und Wirklichkeit: Studien zur Afrikanistik und Orientalistik* (Meisenheim: Anton Hain, 1977) 2:17–29.

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marked by a verb – *kirrēnīdan* – that acquired a strongly pejorative sense: "to dismember in a cruel or clumsy fashion; to mis-create." Other texts retained Yima as their center of interest, but refashioned the narrative, transforming the cosmogony into an account of primordial regicide, atrocity, and usurpation, in which various "demons and men" – most notably Aži Dahāka and Spityura – became the subjects of the brutal cutting.

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CHAPTER 12

Cēšmag, the Lie, and the Logic of Zoroastrian Demonology

1

As a small, but convenient example of the results to be gained from giving serious attention to demonological discourse, I propose to consider an obscure Zoroastrian demon: Cēšmag, who makes an abrupt and bewildering entrance toward the end of a celebrated incident recounted in Book Seven of the *Dēnkard*, a massive Pahlavi compendium committed to writing in the 9th century CE.[1] This is the episode in which Zarathuštra resists temptation by the Lie, a tale that has often been compared to similar stories about the Buddha and Māra, Jesus and Satan, Grail-seekers and "Frau Welt."[2] In E.W. West's pioneering translation – which we will have to revise in significant ways – the text reads as follows.

> [And Aûharmaz*d* spoke thus]: Even unto thee, O Zaratûst! A fiend *will* rush, a female, golden-bodied *and* full-bosomed (so that she wears a bodice), and she rushes to request companionship from thee; a female, golden bodied *and* full-bosomed, to request conversation from thee, to

1 This chapter was originally published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129 (2009): 45–55. For a general description of the *Dēnkard* and its contents, see Jean de Menasce, *Une encyclopédie mazdéenne. Le Denkart* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1958) or Carlo G. Cereti, *La Letteratura Pahlavi: Introduzione ai testi con rifermenti alla storia degli studi e alla tradizione manoscrita* (Milan: Mimesis, 2001), which summarizes the content of Book Seven as follows: "Here, one not only narrates the life of the prophet, but inserts it in universal history as the point of contact between history, epic, and eschatological myth" (p. 68). See also Judith Josephson, "The 'Sitz im Leben' of the Seventh Book of the *Dēnkard*" in Carlo G. Cereti, et al., eds., *Religious themes and texts of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia. Studies in honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2003), pp. 203–12.

2 See, inter alia, A.V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), pp. 51–53, Lewis H. Mills, *Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1913), p. 29, James Hope Moulton, *The Treasure of the Magi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917), pp. 117–18, Heinrich Junker, "Frau Welt in Iran," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 2 (1923): 237–46, Walther Hinz, "Persisches im 'Parzival,' *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 2 (1969): 177–81, Geo Widengren and C. Jouco Bleecker, *Historia Religionum* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), vol. 1, p. 11, and Jes P. Asmussen, "'Frau Welt,' eine Orientalisch-Europäische Beziehung," in *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemin emerito oblata* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), pp. 35–39.

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request co-operation from thee. *But* thou shouldst not grant her companionship, nor conversation, nor shalt thou prescribe *any* conduct for her; afterwards, to revert her downwards, thou shalt utter aloud that triumphant saying the Yathâ-ahu-vairyô."

Zaratûst proceeded to the habitable *and* friendly world, for the purpose of fully observing that beaten track (*khâpisnŏ*) of the embodied existence; then that fiend came forward when he sat in the vicinity of a garment – that garment which, when Vohûmanô *was* conveying *him* to the conference, *was* deposited by him – a female, golden-bodied *and* full-bosomed, and companionship, conversation, and co-operation *were* requested by her from him; she also whined (*dandîdŏ*)*:* "I am Spendarmad."

And Zaratûst spoke thus: "She who is Spendarmad *was* fully observed by me in the light of a cloudless day, and that Spendarmad appeared *to* me fine behind and fine before and fine all round (that is, *in* all positions she was handsome); do thou turn *thy* back, *and* I *shall* know if thou art Spendarmad."

And the fiend spoke to him thus: "*O* Zaratûst of the Spîtâmas! where we are, those who are females are handsome in front, *but* frightfully hideous behind; *so* do not make a demand for my back." After she *had* protested a third *time*, the fiend turned *her* back, and she *was* seen by Zaratûšt behind in the groin; and when matter was exuded, *it was* full of serpents, toads, lizards, centipedes, and frogs.

And that triumphant saying, the Yathâ-ahû-vairyô, was uttered aloud by Zaratûst; then that fiend *was* annihilated, and Kêshmak the Karap rushed forth.[3]

3 E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts, Part V: Marvels of Zoroastrianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1897), pp. 62–63. The text in question is *Dēnkard* 7.4.55–61, which is found at D.M. Madan, ed., *The complete text of the Pahlavi Dinkard* (Bombay: Fort Printing Press, 1911), p. 635, line 14 to p. 636, line 15. This passage is missing in the B Manuscript, edited by M.J. Dresden, *Dēnkart: A Pahlavi Text. Facsimile Edition of the Manuscript B of the K.R. Cama Oriental Institute Bombay* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1966). The Pahlavi text reads as follows.

abar-iz ō tō Zarduxšt druz bē dwārēd mādag-kirb zarrēn-⁺pusēn kū pestānbān darēd. ud hamhāgīh ī az tō ⁺zayēd ud dwarēd mādag-kirb zarrēn hampursagīh az tō zayēd ud hamkardārīh az tō zayēd u-š ma hamhāgīh dahē ud ma hampursagīh ma <ham>kardārīh framāyē ōy ōy pasīh frōd waštan ān ī pērōzgar gōwišn frāz gōwē Yatā-Ahū-Wēryōg. be raft Zarduxšt ō ān ī ⁺mānišnōmand ⁺dōstōmand gēhān ān hāzišn ī axw ī astōmand be nigerišnīh rāy. ēg ō druz frāz mad ka ⁺pad nazdīkīh ī daxmag nišāst ān ī daxmag ī ka Wahman be ō hampursagīh nayīd, a-š be nihād. ⁺mādag-kirb zarrēn pad sēn u-š hamhāgīh ud hampursagīh ud hamkardārīh az ōy ⁺zast. u-š jōyīd kū az hōm ⁺Spandarmad. guft-aš Zarduxšt kū be-m ān nigerēd ⁺kē ⁺Spandarmad andar ān ī rōšn rōz ī xwābar ud ān man sahist ⁺Spandarmad hu-ōrōn ud hu-parrōn ud hu-tarist kū hamāg gyāg nēk būd. pasīh frōd ward šnāsom agar tō hē ⁺Spandarmad. u-š ō ōy druz guft kū: Zarduxšt ī Spitāmān kū awēšān amā hēm kē mādagān ⁺nēkōg az pēš nēmag ud dušzišt az pasīh ma man ō pasīh

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Subsequent translators, most notably Marijan Molé, have improved on West's rendering in several details and there is room for further improvement, but to date no one has reconsidered the mysterious Cēšmag, who is our prime point of interest.[4] Nor have studies of Zoroastrian demonology added to the little that West adduced.[5] Cēšmag remains an enigma.

2

With regard to Cēšmag, West provided a note directing the reader to *Dēnkard* 7.2.44–45, which recounts certain events that transpired when Ahriman sought to forestall Zarathuštra's birth.[6] The story is rather complex and the preceding narrative details how all the Wise Lord's good creation contributed to the prophet's conception. Thus, what it describes as "Zarathuštra's elemental body-substance" (*ān ī Zarduxšt tan gōhr*)[7] fell from the sky with rain, entered the earth, then entered plants that were eaten by two cows who, as a result, began to produce a miraculously pure milk that Pourušāspa and Duγdōw would ultimately drink before conceiving their son.[8]

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framāyēn. pas az sidīgar pahikārīd druz ō pasīh frōd wašt. u-š ōy dīd Zarduxšt pas andarag haxt ka ahrāft estād purr gaz ud ⁺*xūkarag ud karbunag ud pazūg ud wazag. u-š ān ī pērōzgar gōwišn frāz guft Zarduxšt Yatā-Ahū-Wēryōg. ēg ān druz be* ⁺*nēst ud Cēšmag-klp* (NB: this word is ambiguous, as we shall see. West interpreted it as *karap* [= *karb* in modern orthogrphy], but it can also be read as *kirb*, which makes a very important difference) *frāz dwārīd*.

4 Marijan Molé, *La legende de Zoroastre selon les texts pehlevis* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1967), pp. 52–53.

5 Cf. A.V. Williams Jackson's brief discussion in Wilhelm Geiger and Ernest Kuhn, *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie* (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1895–1904) 2: 660, idem, *Zoroastrian Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 93, Louis H. Gray, *The Foundations of the Iranian Religions* (Bombay: D.B. Tarapolevala, 1930), p. 204, Arthur Christensen, *Essai sur la démonologie iranienne*, (Copenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1941), p. 50, and Carsten Colpe, "Ältere und jungere Dämonologie," in Colpe, *Iranier – Aramäer – Hebräer – Hellenen. Iranische Religionen und ihre Westbeziehungen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 471–72.

6 West, *Pahlavi Texts* 5: 63. The note says only "See Chap. II, 44, 45."

7 The phrase recurs in variant forms: *gōhr ī tan* at *Dēnkard* 7.2.37, *gōhr ī Zartuxšt* four times between 7.2.38–42. In all of these, it denotes the quintessential bodily matter that will, upon gestation, develop into the person. Its usage in this passage may involve a bit of wordplay between Pahlavi *gōhr*, the "substance" or "essence" that passes from the cows (Pahlavi *gāw* < Avestan *gō*) to their milk and then to the bodies of Pourušāspa and Dugdōw, where it becomes seed (Pahlavi *cihr*). Mirroring this chain of events, in its phonology, *gōhr* mediates between *gāw* and *cihr*.

8 *Dēnkard* 7.2.36–42 (Madan edition 607.1–608.3, Dresden edition 482.8–483.5). On this narrative, see William R. Darrow, "Zoroaster Amalgamated: Notes on Iranian Prophetology," *History of Religions* 27 (1987): 109–32.

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Hoping to forestall the birth that would threaten his power, the Evil Spirit called an assembly, which is described in the passage West cited. West's translation, however, is sufficiently flawed that it is useful to cite two other versions.

West	*Molé*	*Lincoln*	*Pahlavi text*
One *marvel* is this which is manifested in the struggle of the adversary for concealing and spoiling that milk,	Il est révelé, au sujet des efforts de l'Adversaire pour faire disparaître ce lait et le render inefficace,	This is revealed concerning the struggle of the Adversary to make that milk invisible and to render it powerless.	*ēk ēd ī andar kōšišn ī petyārag abar apaydāgēnīdan ud agārēnīdan ī ān pēm paydāgīhist*
just as revelation mentions thus: Thereupon, at that time, the demons formed *themselves* into an assembly, and the demon of demons growled thus:	Ainsi que le dit la Religion: Vers ce temps-là les dev tinrent une assemblée. Le dev des dev hurla:	As the religion says: At that time when the demons gathered in assembly, the demon of demons snarled at them:	*ciyōn dēn gōwēd kū ēg abar pad ān zamān dēwān hanjamanēnīd. u-š jōyīd dēwān dēw kū:*
"You demons become quite unobservant:	"Vous allez disparaître, ô dev, jusqu'à la lie!	"Demons, you are being defeated.	*bē ⁺wany bawēd dēw tar ul-iz.*
that food is really supplied fresh, so that the formation is settled which *will* extend as far as to that man who *will* be the righteous Zaratûšt;	La préparation (la confection) de cette nourriture a commencé, afin que cet homme, le juste Zoroastre, y soit conçu.	That food is created so that when it is placed in that man (Pourušāspa), it will become he who is Truthful Zarathuštra.	*ān xwarišn dād* (*kū sāxt*) *bē nihād kē tā andar ān mard ō bawēd kē ahlaw Zarduxšt.*
Which of you *will* undertake his destruction, all the while that he exists for mankind, so as to make *him* more contemptibly impotent?"	Qui parmi vous accepte de la détruire, tant qu'il n'y a pas d'homme en elle (la paralyser plus facilement)?"	Which of you accepts to destroy him, so that whenever that good man may exist, that doer of good, he is rendered powerless?"	*kē az ašmā ān padīrēd murnjēnīdan hamē tā ka ān ast humardōm, kū ⁺hukardar agār kardan?*

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(*cont.*)

West	*Molé*	*Lincoln*	*Pahlavi text*
***K*êshmak**, astute in evil, growled thus: "I *will* undertake his destruction."	**Češmak** l'imbécile hurla: "J'accepte de le faire périr."	**Cēšmag**, who was unwise, snarled at him: "I accept to destroy him."	*jōyīd-iš* ***Cēšmag*** *ī dušdānāg kū: man ān padīrom murnjēnīdan.*
Astute in evil, he rushed away with thrice fifty *of* the demons who are Karaps of ***K*êshmak**;	L'imbécile se rua en compagnie de 150 dev, karap de **Češmak**,	That unwise one stormed out with 150 demons, who were forms of **Cēšmag**.	*ān dušdānāg be dwārīd abāg 150 dēwān ī* ***Cēšmag*** *kirbān* [*also legible as karbān*].
And that village *was* partly uprooted and partly destroyed by him, fellow-workers *were* ruined …[a]	renversa et démolit le village, détruisit le bois et la coupe …[b]	Together with him, they destroyed that village, together they returned, and together they shattered the trees …	*u-š ān wīs ham-iz kand ham-iz wašt ud ham dar škast* …[c]

a West, *Pahlavi Texts* 5: 27–28.
b Molé, *La legende de Zoroastre*, pp. 22–23.
c *Dēnkard* 7.2.43–45 (Madan edition, p. 608, lines 4–14; Dresden edition, p. 483, lines 6–14).

Interestingly, the passage never identifies Cēšmag as an evil priest (Pahlavi *karb* [=*karap* in the older orthography]), only as "Cēšmag, who was unwise" (*Cēšmag ī dušdānāg*).[9] A bit later, however, the text does make reference to the one hundred fifty demons led by Cēšmag, using terms that West, Molé, and others understood to confirm the testimony of Dēnkard 7.4.61. Accordingly, they transcribed the Pahlavi phrase *3 sk šya-'n Y +cyšmk klp'n* as *150 dēwān ī Cēšmag karbān*, "150 demons, who are Karaps of Cēšmag."[10] The crucial word is open to question, however, given the inadequacies and ambiguities of the Pahlavi writing system, where short vowels regularly go unrepresented. Accordingly, what is written as *klp* can be transliterated as either *karb* "a priest hostile to

9 *Dēnkard* 7.2.44 (Madan ed. 608.11; Dresden ed. 483.12).
10 *Dēnkard* 7.2.45 (Madan ed. 608.12–13; Dresden ed. 483.13). The translation is that of West, *Pahlavi Texts* 5: 29, who provided neither transcription, nor transliteration of the Pahlavi text. Molé, *La legende de Zoroastre*, p. 22, transliterated the phrase as *150 dēvān i Češmak karapān* (using the older orthography).

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Zoroaster" (from Avestan *karapan-*)[11] or *kirb* "the external, visible form of living beings" (from Avestan *kəhrp-*).[12] If the latter is correct (*pace* West, et al.), then the demons are all "forms of Cēšmag" and not priests in his retinue. Correspondingly, in *Dēnkard* 7.4.61, it is not "Cēšmag the Karap" (*Cēšmag karb*) who suddenly appears in place of the seductive Lie when Zarathuštra bested the latter, but rather "the form of Cēšmag" (*Cēšmag kirb*). Such an interpretation is particularly attractive here, since the immediately preceding text uses the grapheme *klp* in unambiguous fashion, when stating – three separate times – that before Cēšmag entered the story, the Lie appeared to Zarathuštra "in the form of a woman" (*mādag-kirb*).[13]

This philological detail is important for several reasons, as we will gradually see. Inter alia, it permits one to understand that the narrative portrays the Lie as an entity that has no proper form of its own, "form" (Pahlavi *kirb*) being an aspect of material existence. As a result, when attempting to seduce Zarathuštra, the Lie is forced to adopt the bodily form of a beautiful woman (*mādag-kirb*). And when that fails, it shifts to the form of Cēšmag (*Cēšmag-kirb*).

3

That West wanted to make Cēšmag a *karapan* is perfectly understandable. After all, the Older Avestan texts consistently denounce the practices of these priests as antithetical to the Good Religion, and Pahlavi literature goes further still, providing stories of how one of their number murdered Zarathuštra.[14]

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11 Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964) 2: 112 (cited under *karap*), D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 49; cf. Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1904; reprint ed., 1961), cols. 454–55.

12 Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi 2*: 113 (cited under *karp*) and MacKenzie, *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, p. 51 (who offers a simpler translation: "body, form"). Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch,* cols. 467–68, provided a nuanced discussion for the term's Avestan antecedent: "das sichtbare Äussere jedes Wesens und Dings, äussere Erscheinung, sichtbare Gestalt … insbesonder von lebenden Wesen; auch vom gestalteten Stoff selbst 'Leib, Körper,' von Menschen und Göttern … und Tieren." See also the brief discussions of Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books*, pp. 91 and 118. The homography of *karb* and *kirb* is noted by Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi* 1: 170 and MacKenzie, *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, p. 176.

13 Twice at *Dēnkard* 7.4.55 (Madan MS. 635.15 and 16) and once at 7.4.57 (Madan MS. 636.2).

14 Older Avestan references to the *karapan*s include *Yasna* 32.12, 44.20, 46.11, 48.10, and 51.14. Occurrences in the Younger Avesta are more formulaic, but always hostile. Pahlavi accounts of Zarathuštra's death at the hands of a *karb* include *Zand ī Vohuman Yasn* 3.3, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 72.8, *Dēnkard* 5.2.3, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*

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Given that Cēšmag and his assistant demons show similar hostility to the as-yet unborn prophet, it was reasonable enough to imagine they shared this evil-priestly identity. Still, there is nothing in either of the two passages in question that requires such an inference and the fact that Cēšmag and his cohort all are demons (*dēwān*) is more than enough to explain their hostility. What might it possibly mean, then, to speak of the "form" (or "forms") of Cēšmag? To the best of my knowledge, there is only one other passage in Pahlavi literature where this demon appears, and it is there that we get our fullest description. This is *Greater Bundahišn* 27.29 (= *Indian Bundahišn* 28.24), to which West alerted his readers.[15] It states:

> Cēšmag is that one who makes earthquakes and makes the whirlwind also and goes forth in opposition to the clouds.[16]

Once again, there is no suggestion that Cēšmag was a *karapan* and it is difficult to imagine how the demonic force manifested in "natural" disasters (i.e. those phenomena we theorize as such) might assume a priestly identity. The information provided by the *Bundahišn* is fully consistent, however, with the kinds of destruction wrought by Cēšmag & Co. according to *Dēnkard* 7.2.42. Thus, in the latter we were told that after Cēšmag agreed to kill the unborn prophet, he rushed to attack Pourušāspa's village. To describe this, the text uses the daēvic verb *dwāristān*, which would also be appropriate for the flight of a whirlwind, since it denotes motion that is distressingly erratic, unpredictable, menacing, abrupt, and/or violent.[17] Joining their leader, the demons proceed

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36.6 and 47.23, *Zād Spram* 9.0–10.20 and 12.1–10. This tradition was discussed by Jackson, *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, pp. 124–32 and a good deal more critically by Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigour* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1992), pp. 14–16. On the *karapans* in general, see the differing interpretations advanced by Herman Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dargestellt* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1930), pp. 57, 248–49, and Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. I. The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 12.

15 West, *Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 5, p. 28, note 1.

16 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.29: *Cēšmag ān kē wizandag kunēd ud wād-girdag-iz kunēd, ud ō petyāragīh ī abr šawēd*. Although West, *Pahlavi Texts*, vol. 1, p. 110 properly transliterated *wzndk* as *wizandag* (his *vazandak*), which means "quaking, earthquake" (MacKenzie, p. 92), he apparently confused it with *wizend* (written *wznd* or, more properly, *wzynd*), "hurt, harm, injury" (MacKenzie, p. 93). Clearly, the earthquake was meant to parallel the whirlwind, as was recognized by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria, *Zand Akāsīh. Iranian or Greater Bundahišn* (Bombay: 1956), who treated the term correctly at pp. 238–39.

17 *Dēnkard* 7.2.45 (Madan ed. 608.12–13; Dresden ed. 483.12–13): *ān dušdānāg be dwārēd abāg 150 dēwān ī Cēšmag kirbān*. On the semantics of *dwāristān*, see MacKenzie, *Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, p. 29 and Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, 2: 69.

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to level the village and shatter its trees, and one comes to understand that if Cēšmag represents the power manifest in storms, whirlwinds, and earthquakes, the others represent the manifold forms and specific instances in which this power appears.[18]

However destructive such power may be, Zoroastrian scriptures make clear that the demonic can never prevail in any absolute or final sense. Thus, in the case at hand, Cēšmag's forces devastate the village, but fail to destroy the cows, the milk, or Pourušāspa and Duγdōw. On the contrary, once the storm abates, husband and wife drink the milk (mixed with haoma), make love for the first time, and thereby conceive Zarathuštra.[19]

4

Other stories follow, in which other demons try to accomplish what Cēšmag could not: i.e., the destruction of Zarathuštra. The story with which we began is one of those many stories, and in order to appreciate some of its complexities it is necessary to improve on West's translation.

> [The Wise Lord said to Zarathuštra]: "In the form of a woman, with gold on her breast, she slinks up to you, Zarathuštra, to ask friendship from you, to ask consultation from you, to ask collaboration from you. Do not give her friendship, nor consultation, nor collaboration. Order her to turn her rear to the front and recite that victorious act of speech, the Ahuna Vairiia prayer."
>
> Zarathuštra went to the inhabited, friendly world in order to see to the conversion of corporeal beings. There he met the Lie when he sat close to a funerary platform (the funerary platform to which Good Mind led him for an exchange of questions and answers. He placed him there). Female in form, with gold on her breast, she asked him for friendship, consultation, and cooperation. And she snarled at him: "I am Spandarmad."
>
> Zarathuštra said to her: "I have seen Spandarmad in the clear light of a fine day and it seems to me that Spandarmad is fair in front, fair in back,

18 *Dēnkard* 7.2.45 (Madan ed. 608.13–14; Dresden ed. 483.14): *u-š ān wīs ham-iz kand ham-iz waštan ud ham dar škast*. Note that the associative particle *ham* is repeated three times (twice with the emphatic suffix *-iz*), each time reasserting that the demons were part of a collaborative group that "together" (*ham*) accomplished these acts of destruction.

19 *Dēnkard* 7.2.46–52.

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fair all around, beautiful in every place. Turn your rear to the front and I will recognize if you are Spandarmad."

And the Lie said to him: "Spitāma Zarathuštra, we who are women are beautiful from the front and hideous from the rear. Do not order me to show my rear."

The Lie resisted three times, then turned her rear. And then Zarathuštra saw that between her raised haunches, she was full of snakes, hedgehogs, lizards, worms, and frogs. Zarathuštra recited that victorious act of speech, the Ahuna Vairiia formula. Then that Lie did not exist and the form of Cēšmag stormed forth.[20]

The text is careful to situate this incident at precisely that moment when Zarathuštra first proclaimed the Good Religion and began making converts of those who would help vanquish the powers of evil.[21] Perceiving this threat, the Evil Spirit responded by dispatching "the Lie" (*druz*) to do that which Cēšmag and others had failed to accomplish, for it was through falsehood that he would thwart the nascent power of truth. The place of encounter is also significant, for they meet at a funerary platform (*daxmag* < Avestan *daxma-*),[22] a contradictory space where life and death, purity and pollution, matter and spirit come into the closest and most anxiety-ridden contact, thereby establishing the possibility for a similar confrontation between male and female, the best of humans and the most dangerous demon, truth and the lie.

That "the Lie" is personified as female surely reflects a certain patriarchal misogyny, but is also motivated by an older Avestan tradition, where

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20 *Dēnkard* 7.4.55–61 (Madan, ed. 635.14–636.15; missing in Dresdan ed.). The text is given in note 3 above.

21 *Dēnkard* 7.4.57 (Madan ed. 635.20–22; missing in Dresden ed.): "Zarathuštra went to the inhabited, friendly world in order to see to the conversion of corporeal beings." *be raft Zarduxšt ō ān ī* ⁺*mānišnōmand* ⁺*dōstōmand gēhān ān hāzišn ī axw ī astōmand be nigerišnīh rāy*.

22 *Dēnkard* 7.4.57 (Madan ed. 635.22–636.1; missing in Dresden ed.): "There he met the Lie when he sat close to a funerary platform." *ēg ō druz frāz mad ka* ⁺*pad nazdīkīh ī daxmag nišāst ān ī daxmag.* Where I transliterate *dhmk* and transcribe *daxmag*, West, *Pahlavi Texts* 5: 62 read ²*jāmag* (*yāmak* in the older orthography) "clothing, garment," and Molé pp. 52–53 read ¹*jāmag* (*yāmak*) "vessel, goblet" ("récipient"). All three terms are homographic and the readings are all possible, but from the Avesta onward, the funeral platform was identified as a site where demons congregated, while clothing and goblets have no associations that are particularly appropriate to the characters and narrative in question. See, inter alia, *Vīdaēuudāt* 7.53–57, where the Wise Lord responds to Zarathuštra's question "Where is the demon?" (*kuua asti daēuuō*) by pointing him to the daxma and saying "Truly, this is the support of the demons" (*aēšō zī asti daēuuanąm rapakō*).

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the corresponding noun (*druj-*) is feminine in gender.[23] More striking than the simple fact of female identity in the present passage is the precise kind of woman the Lie is made out to be, for she is not only sensuous, seductive, and beautifully adorned, but *duplicitous*, and that – fittingly enough – in two different fashions. First, she is not who she claims to be, for she calls herself Spendarmad, i.e. the divine being who is conventionally identified with the earth and is also regarded as the most beautiful, most fertile, most sustaining of females.[24] Second, in the most literal fashion, she is shown to be two-sided: gorgeous from the front, hideous from the back, and she systematically hides her unattractive rear (which harbors all manner of verminous creatures [Pahlavi *xrafstarān*]), until Zarathuštra – coached by the Wise Lord – puts a stop to her deception.

Zarathuštra's insistence that she turn around thus produces a first act of disclosure, revealing that the female in question was not *simplex* and lovely, but *duplex* in form; not Spendarmad, but the Lie or – to put it differently – the bodily form of a woman, distorted (literally de-formed) by the demonic presence inside it. Having accomplished this unveiling, the prophet then compounded his victory by reciting the most powerful, most perfect, and most profoundly truth-filled utterance known to the Zoroastrian tradition: the Ahuna Vairiia formula, which constitutes the opening verse of the Gāthās, i.e. the oldest, most sacred section of the Avesta. With this act of truth, he produced a second revelation. As the text states:

> Zarathuštra recited that victorious act of speech, the Ahuna Vairiia formula. Then that Lie did not exist and the form of Cēšmag stormed forth.[25]

That Cēšmag appears in this climactic moment makes a certain amount of sense. First, we are reminded of this same demon's attempt to preempt the birth of the prophet, in light of which we understand the current episode as a

23 Female personifications of the Lie appear already in the Avesta, as at *Yašt* 19.95 and *Vīdaēuudāt* 18.30–59.

24 Most recently on Spendarmad and her association with the earth, see Prods Oktor Skjærvø, "Ahura Mazdā and Ārmaiti, Heaven and Earth, in the Old Avesta," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 122 (2002): 399–410. On the Zoroastrian system that identifies the Wise Lord's six original material creations with the divine beings known as "Beneficent Immortals (*Aməša Spəntas*), see two articles of Herman Lommel that are conveniently collected in Bernfried Schlerath, ed., *Zarathustra* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, 1970): "Symbolik der Elemente in der zoroastrischen Religion," pp. 253–69 and "Die Elemente im Verhältnis zu den Aməša Spəntas," pp. 377–96.

25 *Dēnkard* 7.4.61 (Madan ed. 636.13–15; missing in Dresden ed.): *u-š ān ī pērōzgar gōwišn frāz guft Zarduxšt Yatā-Ahū-Wēryōg. ēg ān druz be* $^{+}$*nēst ud Cēšmag-kirb frāz dwārīd.*

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continuation of the ongoing – but always unsuccessful – battle that the forces of evil wage against Zarathuštra and the truth he introduces. Second, insofar as Cēšmag is the demonic force that manifests itself in violent disruptions of the natural order, we remember that Ahriman's original attack on the earth took the form of an earthquake that disfigured the previously level, tranquil, perfect plain created by Ohrmazd.[26] Which is to say, having claimed to be the Earth (= Spendarmad), the Lie shows herself to be the Earth's arch-enemy. Not only is she not what she appears and claims to be, she is its very antithesis.

5

One last interpretation might be advanced, if only tentatively, since it rests on a textual emendation of the phrase that reads: *ADYN ZK dlwc BRA w* [or: *n*] *kst*. The first four of these words are unproblematic and can be confidently transcribed as *ēg ān druz be* ("Then that Lie …").[27] Where one expects the verb, however, one finds *w kst* (or: *n kst*), which makes no sense and is best explained as a scribal error. Attempting to resolve this problem, H.S. Nyberg eliminated the space and transliterated ⁺*wkst*, which he transcribed as ⁺*vikast*, for which he reconstructed a verb **vikastan,* "to disappear," while labeling the attempt "uncertain."[28] Conceivably, West reached similar conclusions, since he translated the verb "was destroyed," with no supporting explanation.[29] For his part, Molé also collapsed the letters into one word, but took the ambiguous initial letter as *n*, rather than *w* (perfectly possible, since the same grapheme does service for both phonemes) and read the next ligature as *sy,* rather than *ks* (also possible, given the formal resemblance of the letters involved). Accordingly, he transcribed ⁺*nsyt*, transliterated ⁺*nasīt*, and posited a verb **nasītan* "to perish,"

26 *Greater Bundahišn* 6C.0–1 (TD² MS 65.12–14): "The third battle was waged by the earth. When the Evil One stormed in, the earth trembled and the substance of mountains was created in the earth. At the same time as the quaking of the earth, the mountains were set in motion." *sidīgar ardīg zamīg kard. cīyōn gannāg andar dwārist zamīg bē <wi>zandīd. ān gōhr ī kōf ī andar zamīg dād ēstād. pad wizandišn zamīg ham zamān kōf ō ī rawišn ēstād.* Cf. *Zād Spram* 2.5 and 3.28. I have discussed this motif in *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 38–50.

27 *Dēnkard* 7.4.61 (Madan MS. 636.15).

28 Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi* 2: 212. Nyberg's analysis reflects his uncertainty: "It could be < *vi* + Av. (459 sq.) *kas-* 'to perceive', v.s.v. *ākast*, a SW form with *-st* instead of *-št*; the NW form would be **vikašt*. Perhaps better **vi*[*ni*]*kist* 'she was cut to pieces, she split' < **vi-* or *ni-kirst* < *vi-* or *ni-* + *kṛsta-* from Av. (452 sqq.) *karət-*, v. *kirrēnitan*."

29 West, *Pahlavi Texts* 5: 63.

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which – like Nyberg's **vikastan* – is unlisted in the standard dictionaries and attested in no other text.[30] Preferable, in my opinion, is to transcribe *+nyst* (understanding the *-k-* of the manuscript as a not uncommon scribal error for *-y-*) and transliterate *+nēst*, i.e. the regular negative copula.[31] The sentence then reads *ēg ān druz be +nēst*, "Then that Lie did not exist."

Dēnkard 7.4.61 thus reports two events that follow on pronouncement of the Ahuna Vairiia, correlating the two via the conjunction "and" (Pahlavi *ud*). The first of these is far the starker and more sweeping of the two: "Then that Lie did not exist" (*ēg ān druz be +nēst*). Use of the negative copula (Pahlavi *nēst*) rather than the verb *būdan* ("to become") suggests that what is described is a state of being – or, more precisely, a state of *non*-being – and not a transformative process. Perhaps we are meant to understand that Zarathuštra's speech-act was so powerful that it utterly annihilated the Lie. Alternatively, following lines advanced by Shaul Shaked, Jes Asmussen, and Hanns-Peter Schmidt, the phrase might suggest not that the Lie ceased to be, but that it never was.[32] In that case, Zarathuštra's act of truth did not destroy something extant; rather, it dispelled an illusion through which something non-extant conjured up the simulacrum of being or, more precisely, it exorcised a demonic force from the bodily form (*kirb*) it temporarily inhabited. This is consistent with the tendency of Pahlavi sources to theorize Ahriman, the Lie, and the demons as spiritual (*mēnōg*) entities or forces of an evil sort, whose non-being (*nēstīh*) amounted to the fact that they had no material substance (*gētīg*) of

30 Molé, *La legende de Zoroastre,* p. 52. The verb is listed in his glossary at p. 292, with reference to other occurences at *Dēnkard* 7.7.34 and 7.7.39, but it does not show up in Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, MacKenzie, *Concise Dictionary of Pahlavi*, nor in the glossaries to other, more recently published Pahlavi texts.

31 Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi*, pp. 87 and 137, MacKenzie, *Concise Dictionary of Pahlavi*, p. 59. One must acknowledge, however, that *nēst* is most often represented by the logogram LOYT, rather than being spelled out.

32 Shaul Shaked, "Some Notes on Ahreman, the Evil Spirit, and his Creation," in E.E. Urbach et al., eds., *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 227–34, reprinted in Shaked, *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), Jes P. Asumssen, "Some Remarks on Sasanian Demonology," in *Commémoration Cyrus. Actes du Congrès de Shiraz* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), pp. 236–41, Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "The Non-Existence of Ahreman and the Mixture (*gumēzišn*) of Good and Evil," in *K.R. Cama Oriental Institute. Second International Congress Proceedings* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1996), pp. 79–95. See also Antonio Panaino, "A Few Remarks on the Zoroastrian Conception of the Status of Angra Mainyu and of the Daēvas," *Res Orientales* 13 (2001): 99–107 and Albert de Jong, "Eeuwig, ongeschapen, maar zonder 'bestaan': de Boze Geest en zijn werkelijkheid in het zoroastrisme," in Rob Wiche, ed., *Des Duivels. Het kwaad in religieuze en spirituele tradities* (Leuven: Acco, 2005), pp. 51–64, esp. 61–2.

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their own.[33] As a result, when they sought to take physical action, they were obliged to penetrate, appropriate, or colonize the bodies and forms of the Wise Lord's creatures, who – by virtue of his good acts of creation – possessed both *mēnōg* and *gētīg* existence.[34]

The second event of the *Dēnkard* passage confirms this interpretation and holds keen interest of its own: "and the form of Cēšmag stormed forth" (*ud Cēšmag kirb frāz dwārīd*). Cēšmag, as we have seen, "… is that one who makes earthquakes and makes the whirlwind also and goes forth in opposition to the clouds."[35] This translation, however, is somewhat distorted by the demands of English, and the phrase rendered "that one who" (Pahlavi *ān kē*) could be either personal or impersonal. With equal justice, one can translate "… is *that which* makes earthquakes, etc."

Given our own cultural predilections, we are inclined to see Cēšmag as a fully personified demonic being responsible for whirlwinds, earthquakes, and the like. The Bundahišn, however, is equally disposed to theorize it as a sinister impersonal force: a disembodied, intangible, but eminently destructive energy. It is not the earthquake or whirlwind per se, but the motion that ripples through air and soil, causing them to wreak havoc or, more abstract still, the negative intention that unleashes such violent energies.

If the test of existence is materiality and concretion of substance, then Cēšmag – like the Lie, also like death – does not exist in precisely this sense, for even the whirlwind lacks materiality of this sort (not to speak of the whirlwind's cause or source). Yet the effects of forces like these are real, material,

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33 On the opposed categories *mēnōg* ("spiritual") and *gētīg* ("material") in Zoroastrian thought, see Shaul Shaked, "The notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in the Pahlavi texts and their relation to eschatology," *Acta Orientalia* 33 (1971): 59–107, reprinted in *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam* and Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras: Geschichte – Gegenwart – Rituale* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002) 1: 333–38.

34 Numerous examples are provided in the articles of Shaked, Asmussen, and Schmidt cited in note 32, from which one might cite the following passages by way of example.
Dādestān ī Dēnīg 36.51: The Wise Lord's creation is spiritual and also material (*mēnōg ud gētīg-iz*). That of the Lie is not material (*nēst gētīg*). The Lie joins (its) bad spiritual being to the material being (of the Wise Lord's good creations). *dām ī Ohrmazd mēnōg ud gētīg-iz. ōy <ī> druz nēst gētīg be wad mēnōgīh abyōzēd ō gētīg.*

Dēnkard 5.7.2 (Madan MS. 440.6–8): [Self-protection obliges one] to recognize the deceit and delusion-production of the Evil Spirit and demons as the process of their subtly mixing themselves into good creations; their concealment of the right path and way; their false-guiding of being into non-being (*ast pad nēst*)… *be šnāxtan frēftārīh ud wiyābāngarīh ī Ahreman ud dēwān ciyōn gumēxtagīh ī-šān bārīkīhā andar weh-dahišnān nihuftārīh ī-šān rāh ī ristag ī rāst ud zūr-nimūdārīh ī-šān ast pad nēst …*

35 *Greater Bundahišn* 27.19: *Cēšmag ān ke wizandag* (*or: wizendag*) *kunēd ud wād-girdag-iz kunēd, ud ō petyāragīh ī abr šawēd.*

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and palpable enough. Mulling over these ambiguous texts and elusive issues, one begins to realize that Zoroastrian demonology is not an incoherent jumble of ignorant superstition and puerile fears. Rather, demonological speculation and discourse possessed intellectual seriousness, existential depth, and philosophical originality. The category of the demonic was constituted as that spiritual (i.e. non-material) force that manifests itself in material destruction, while specific demons like Cēšmag, Zarmān (old age, decrepitude), Astwihād and Wīzarš (the onset of death), Nas (post mortem decay, bodily corruption), Niyāz (need, want, misery), Āz (greed, appetite), Tariz and Zariz (hunger and thirst), Waran (desire, lust), and others[36] represent those aspects of non-being that can – and periodically do – reach aggressively into the realm of being with profoundly disruptive consequences. At such times, they threaten to drag something that is (or, viewing things from the opposite perspective, that was) into the land of the empty and dead. Behind even the most cursory depiction of demons (as in certain vignettes from the *Arda Wirāz Nāmag*, for instance) stood much more sophisticated theories, in which the category of the demonic summarized the threat of dissolution that non-being ever poses to humanity and to the rest of God's creation. Within such an optic, these demons assume a new, and in fact more terrifying importance, apparent even to the most jaded modern, as we come to recognize them as something quite literally like the black holes of a pre-modern cosmology, where physics, metaphysics, and ethics remain inextricably intertwined.

36 Similar are those demons who represent negative states of speech, thought, or emotion, i.e. non-material entities that pose threats to the equilibrium, happiness, and ultimately the life of living creatures. These would include demons like Akōman (evil thought), Mihōxt (evil speech, falsehood), Frēftār (deceit), Spazg (slander), Xešm (wrath), Arešk (envy, jealousy), Būšāsp (exhaustion), Wadag (wickedness), etc. The demons associated with diseases (Tab ["fever"], Kapasti ["infection"], Yask ["sickness"], Dard ["pain"], Aš ["evil eye"], etc.) are similar, representing non-material forces that invade, afflict, and distort the person. The site of their activity is the body, however, and not the mind.

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CHAPTER 13

Anomaly, Science, and Religion: Treatment of the Planets in Medieval Zoroastrianism

1

Among the liveliest narratives of emergent modernity is the story of how Tycho Brahe (1546–1601), Imperial Mathematician at the court of Rudolph II, struggled to reconcile his incomparably precise observations of planetary orbits with a geocentric cosmos by producing increasingly complex models of the cosmos, involving epicycles, epicycles-within-epicycles and other sophisticated mechanisms to account for the peculiarities of planetary motion.[1] For every specific problem that arose, he developed another ingenious solution, and with every solution, there arose further problems. None of these was more intractable than the orbit of Mars, study of which Brahe assigned to his young assistant, Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), who had previously grappled with similar problems as regards Mercury. As Brahe's observations detailed, planets – and no other heavenly bodies – seemed to move forward at some times, then reversed direction for a period, only to move forward again in a "retrograde" pattern incompatible with the geocentric model of Ptolemy (which Brahe was working to modify and salvage), but equally incompatible with the rival heliocentric model of Copernicus, which Kepler favored. For both models followed Aristotle – and a certain theological sensibility – in maintaining that the motion of all heavenly bodies should be circular, continuous, smooth and perfect.

Only after Brahe died in 1601 and Kepler succeeded him as Imperial Mathematician (a position he held until 1612), was the latter able to study all his predecessor's detailed records, scrutiny of which led him to realize that to resolve this conundrum, it was necessary to reject both of the available systems and rethink things in radical fashion. Thus, in his *Astronomia Nova* (1609), Kepler first theorized that heavenly orbits were elliptic, and not circular, which permitted him to understand their motion as smooth and unidirectional with reference to the sun, and to locate the sun at one focal point of the ellipses, rather than making it the absolute center of perfect circles. Given that the other planets are observed from an earth no longer taken to be stable,

1 This chapter was originally published in *History of Religions* 48 (2009): 270–83.

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but now understood to itself travel an elliptical course in a heliocentric system on the same plane as the others, the motion of the planets thus *seems* to turn retrograde when the earth passes them, but this illusion is the effect of the earthbound observer's shifting perspective, and does not accurately depict the actual pattern of planetary motion.[2]

This is the story that Thomas Kuhn put at the center of his own landmark contribution, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1st ed. 1962), where he developed the notion that "normal science" proceeds by relatively routine problem solving until such time as research identifies "anomalies" – like the vagaries of retrograde planets – that cannot be explained on the basis of extant knowledge and theory. Recognition of such anomalies and repeated failure to resolve them plunge normal science into a period of "crisis," in which scientists are obliged to rethink the foundational assumptions Kuhn called "paradigms." And, as he came to argue, there was nothing inherently abnormal, unnatural, or monstrous about an anomaly. Rather, anomalies are constituted as such precisely because they contradict the expectations of accepted wisdom. Properly understood, anomalies are diagnostic and useful, for their intractably aberrant features reveal the blind spots and inadequacies in conventional knowledge, and they serve as signposts for further inquiry, debate, and progress. Anomalies thus provide impetus to the whole process, forcing "paradigm

2 This narrative has been recounted endlessly, always in heroic fashion and always as a hallmark of the rupture between science and religion, reason and faith, individual genius and Church authority, the modern and the medieval. Among recent retellings, note, for instance, Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Kitty Ferguson, *The Nobleman and his Housedog: Tycho Brahe and Johannes Kepler: The Strange Partnership that revolutionized Science* (London: Review, 2002), Juan Luis Garcia Hourcade, *La rebellion de los astónomos: Copérnico y Kepler* (Madrid: Nivola Libros Ediciones, 2000), John Robert Christianson, *On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe and his Assistants, 1570–1601* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Job Kozhamthadam, *The Discovery of Kepler's Laws: The Interaction of Science, Philosophy, and Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), Owen Gingrich, *The Eye of Heaven: Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler* (New York: American Institute of Physics, 1993), Henriette Chardak, *Kepler, le chien des étoiles* (Paris: Librairie Séguier, 1989), Edward Rosen, *Three Imperial Mathematicians: Kepler trapped between Tycho Brahe and Ursus* (New York: Abaris Books, 1986). For less conventional variants and attempts to spice up the familiar story, see Joshua Gilder and Anne-Lee Gilder, *Heavenly Intrigue: Johannes Kepler, Tycho Brahe, and the Murder behind one of History's Greatest Scientific Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), and James A. Connor, *Kepler's Witch: An Astronomer's Discovery of Cosmic Order amid Religious War, Political Intrigue, and the Heresy Trial of his Mother* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2004).

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shifts" that improve theory and render the former aberration comprehensible as an orderly, natural part of a world now more perfectly understood.[3]

In the following discussion, I want to explore how Zoroastrian cosmology responded when it was forced to take account of the same perplexing aberrations in planetary motion that worried Brahe, Kepler, and others. This occurred in the latter part of the Sassanian dynasty (226–651 CE), when Greek and Indian astronomical writings made their way to the Persian court.[4] Newly introduced from outside, these data posed a challenge to established Persian wisdom no less grave than they did when they were introduced in Europe a millennium later by way of Islamic sources.[5] What is more, they did so by striking at much the same vital issues: the relation of heaven and earth, nature as orderly or chaotic, and the design of the cosmos as an index of God's plans for his creation. Further, the ways Sassanian intellectuals modified prior cosmological theory in order to take account of the planets and related phenomena were no less subtle or ingenious than those of Kepler and his successors, for all that they differed strongly in their style and content. Ultimately, it is this difference that most intrigues me, for here, I suggest, we can perceive the categorical divide between the alternative styles of thought, speech, sentiment, habit, orientation, and purpose that modernity organized in its binary contrast of "religion" and "science." What I hope to explore, then, is the relative immunity of certain cosmologies to a crisis provoked by aberrant data, and the almost limitless capacity of systems we might call religious, pre-, or non-scientific to adduce evidence and arguments that reinforce the system's presupposition, recuperating even those phenomena that other (more "scientific") styles of cosmology will construe as threatening anomalies.

2

Older Iranian cosmology (i.e. that attested in the *Avesta*) gave a relatively simple account of the celestial regions, recognizing three different levels of

3 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962; 2d ed. 1970; 3rd ed. 1996).

4 For a general summary, see Ch. Brunner, "Astronomy and Astrology in the Sassanian Period," *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Vol. II* (London & New York: Routledege & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 862–68, esp. p. 867.

5 For Copernicus's use of Islamic astronomical sources, see George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), which also contains a superb discussion of the way Islamic cosmologists struggled to account for planetary motion.

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the heavens, with the stars occupying the lowest position, followed by moon and sun.[6] Occasionally a fourth level, that "of endless lights" (*anaγranąm raocaŋąm*), is set beyond the sun,[7] and one rather baroque passage imagines nine different levels, four sub- and four superlunary.[8]

Always, however, the stars are lowest and this is noteworthy, since such placement contradicts the evidence of eclipses, which reveal the moon to be nearer the earth than either the sun or stars.[9] Organization of the system rests, then, not on empirical observation, but on a religious homology so powerful as to obviate the need for close reading of the phenomena themselves. Thus, luminosity and height are imagined to co-vary, such that the more light a body possesses (or seems to possess), the loftier it must be: Sun above Moon, Moon above Stars, Stars above Earth, Earth above Hell. Celestial light is further correlated with wisdom, virtue, divinity, and beauty; darkness, with the opposite qualities.

The model is clear, logically consistent, and emotionally satisfying, if a bit simple and static. In truth, only two Avestan passages show interest in the motion of heavenly bodies, and the first of these (*Yašt* 13.57–58) asserts that such motion was not part of the Wise Lord's original plan for creation.

> We sacrifice to the fravašis (i.e. pre-existent souls) of the righteous,
> who showed their paths
> to the stars, moon, sun,
> and endless lights,
> all of which previously stood in the same place
> for a long time, not moving forward.

6 *Yasna* 2.11, 3.13, 4.16, 7.13, *Yašt* 10.145, 12.25, *Vīdaēuudāt* 2.40, and 7.52 list these realms in ascending order (stars, moon, sun); *Yašt* 13.16 and *Vīdaēuudāt* 9.41 move from the top down (sun, moon, stars), but the picture is the same in either case. The only relevant passage of the Older Avesta (*Yasna* 44.3) shows neither of these patterns, but first names "the path of sun and stars" (*xvāng strāmca … aduuānəm*), then speaks of the moon and its phases (*kə yā må uxšiieiti nərəfsaiti*). The fullest discussion of this system and its historic origins is Antonio Panaino, "Uranographia Iranica I: The Three Heavens in the Zoroastrian Tradition and the Mesopotamian Background," in Rike Gyselen, ed., *Au Carrefour des religions. Mélanges offerts à Philippe Gignoux* (Paris: Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1995), pp. 205–25.

7 Thus *Yasna* 1.11, 1.16, 71.9, *Vīdaēuudāt* 11.1–2, 11.10.

8 *Yašt* 12.29–35, which lists in ascending order: 1) stars that contain the seeds of water, 2) stars that contain the seeds of earth, 3) stars that contain the seeds of plants, 4) stars that contain the Good Mind, 5) the Moon, which contains the seeds of cattle, 6) the Sun, possessed of swift horses, 7) the Endless Lights, 8) the Best Existence, 9) the House of Song.

9 Panaino, "The Three Heavens in the Zoroastrian Tradition," p. 210 et passim.

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> [That was] before the enmity of the demons,
> before the assaults of the demons.
> But now they move forward
> to the distant turning point of the way, arriving at the turning point of the way,
> which is the final Renovation (*fraš̄o.kərəti*).[10]

Elsewhere, Zoroastrian texts narrate in detail how the Evil Spirit (Avestan Aŋra Mainiiu, Pahlavi Ahriman) led a host of demonic powers against the pristine creations of the Wise Lord (Avestan Ahura Mazdā, Pahlavi Ohrmazd), introducing strife, mixture, confusion, mortality, fear, and other hallmarks of existence as we know it. This Assault produced a rupture, not only in the nature of being, but also in the nature of time, replacing an unchanging eternity ("infinite time," *zruuān akarana*) with a period of turbulence and struggle ("long time," *zruuān darəγa*).[11] And in that moment when demonic aggression made the celestial bodies start rotating, history proper began.

History, however, is finite, and some millennia hence the forces of good will vanquish all demonic powers in definitive fashion. At that point, the world's original perfection will be restored in a complex set of events known as the *Fraš̄o.kərəti* ("*Renovation*" or, more literally, "*Wonder-making*") and a final (or eschatological) eternity will begin. The passage just quoted thus organizes time, nature, and morality in a set of binary contrasts (Table 13.1).

---

10 *Yašt* 13.57 *ašāunąm … yazamaide*
yå strąm måŋhō hūrō
anaγranąm raocaŋąm
paϑō daēsaiiən ašaoniš
yōi para ahmāt hame gātuuō darəγəm
hištənta afraš̄māntō
daēvanąm parō tbaēšaŋhat
daēvanąm parō draomōhu.
58. āat tē nūrąm frauuazənti
dūraēuruuaēsəm aδuuanō uruuaēsəm nāšəmna
yim fraš̄o.kərətōit vaŋhuiiå.

Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 2.17 (TD[2] MS. 29.12–15): "Until the coming of the Adversary's Assault, the moon, sun, and stars stood still and did not move. Time ever passed in pure fashion (*abēzagīhā*) and it was always noon. Then, from the coming of the Adversary's Assault, they were set in motion (which will continue) until the End." *tā madan ī ēbgat māh ud xwaršēd awešān stāragān estād nē raft hēnd. ud abēzagīhā zamān hamē widārd ud hamwār nēmrōz būd. pas az madan ī ēbgat ō rawišn estād hēnd ud tā frazām.*

11 In Avestan texts, "infinite time" appears at *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.9 and "long time" at *Yašt* 13.53, 19.26, *Yasna* 62.3. The two are set in contrast at *Yasna* 72.10, *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.13, and *Nyayiš* 1.8, although in these passages, finite historic time is designated "time of the long dominion" (*zruuān darəγō.xᵛaδāta*).

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TABLE 13.1 Correlated binary oppositions in *Yašt* 13.57–58

Moral and physical state of Creation	***Perfect***	***Mixture of Good and Evil***
Relations among creatures	Peace, Harmony	Conflict
Nature of time	Eternity (primordial and final)	Historic, finite
Nature of celestial bodies	Stable, Unmoving	Rotating

One other Avestan passage adds a detail to this picture. This is *Yašt* 8.8, which occurs in a hymn devoted to the star Sirius (*Tištrya*), whom the hymn elsewhere describes as "lord and supervisor of all stars."[12] The verse of interest to us, however, suggests a contrast between the real, proper, good stars, and another, more ominous set of celestial bodies, against which Sirius struggles.

> We sacrifice to Sirius,
> who conquers witches (*pairikās*),
> who subdues witches
> that hover between earth and sky
> in the form of shooting-stars (literally "worm stars," *stārō kərəmå*) .[13]

As Antonio Panaino has shown, the sinister shooting-stars in question are to be understood as the seasonal meteor showers of late summer, associated with the period of drought that normally ends when Sirius gains ascendance and the meteor showers desist.[14] The image thus aligns another set of binary oppositions – Sirius vs. the meteors, the moist vs. the dry, healthy vs. unhealthy times of the year, divine vs. demonic forces – giving particular stress to the contrast between two different forms of celestial motion. Thus, where *Yašt*

12 *Yašt* 8.44: *ratūm paiti.daēmca vīspaēšąm stārąm.*

13 *Yašt* 8.8: *Tištrīm stārəm raēuuantəm*
xᵛarənaŋuhatəm yazamaide
yō pairikå tauruuaiieiti
yō pairikå titāraiieiti
yå stārō kərəmå patanti
antarə ząm asmanəmca.

14 Antonio Panaino, *Tištrya* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990–95), Vol. 1, p. 97, Vol. 2, pp. 1 and 19–23.

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TABLE 13.2 Correlated binary oppositions in *Yašt* 8.8

Moral and physical state of Creation	***Ideal, Ohrmazdian***	***Troubled, Ahrimanian***
Time of year	Rainy season	Dry season
Quality of existence	Moist, Conducive to the flourishing of life	Dry, Threatening death and sterility
Nature of celestial motion	Regular rotation of sun, moon, and stars	Unpredictable downward motion of shooting stars ("*Witches*")

13.57–58 associates stasis with perfection and rotation with the mixed state, *Yašt* 8.8 contrasts the normal rotation of stars like Sirius, which it takes to be good, and the unpredictable motion of meteors falling from heaven to earth, theorized as decidedly evil (Table 13.2).

Of planets, however, the *Avesta* has nothing to say.

3

Within a Zoroastrian context, the planets first appear in Pahlavi texts that were committed to writing in the 9th century CE, but drew on scientific initiatives of the Sassanian dynasty, particularly those of Xusrōw Anōširwan (r. 531–78 CE), a king who was particularly concerned to acquire Greek and Indian scientific texts.[15] Certain mathematical details make clear the Indic influence on Sassanian astronomy, as David Pingree demonstrated,[16] and some of the Middle Persian technical vocabulary is borrowed from Greek, e.g. use of Pahlavi

15 Thus David Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology, from Babylon to Bīkāner* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1997), esp. pp. 39–50, idem, "History of Astronomy in Iran," *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Vol. II* (London & New York: Routledege & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 858–62, esp. pp. 859–60, idem, "Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran," *Isis* 54 (1963): 229–46, esp. pp. 241–42, and Otto Neugebauer, "The Transmission of Planetary Theories in Ancient and Medieval Astronomy," *Scripta Mathematica* 22 (1956): 165–92, esp. p. 172.

16 See, for example, Pingree, "Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran," op cit., pp. 241–43, idem, *From Astral Omens to Astrology*, pp. 39–40.

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spihr, derived from Greek *sphairos*, as the name for the celestial firmament.[17] The neologism that was introduced to denote the planets, however, is strictly Iranian in origin, and holds considerable interest.

The word in question is Pahlavi *abāxtarān*, which means, most literally "the backward ones."[18] Apparently, this was meant to describe the planets' retrograde motion, which Iranian sages found as profoundly disquieting as did Copernicus, Brahe, and Kepler.

> As for the planets (*abāxtarān*)... they disrupt all the arrangement of time, which depends on (the steady rotation of) the zodiacal constellations (*axtarān*), as is apparent to the eye. They invert the relations of up and down, they diminish what is increased, and their motion is not like that of the zodiacal constellations. For sometimes it is quick, sometimes it is slow, sometimes it is backward-motion (*abāz rawišn*), and sometimes it is stationary.[19]

Elsewhere, the planets are said to be deceitful,[20] destructive,[21] demonic,[22] producers of old age and evil.[23] Sometimes they are accused of stealing light from proper stars.[24] Two forms of action, however, reveal their true nature. First, to describe the motion of planets, the texts consistently employ the verb *dwāristan*, which is used only with reference to demonic creatures, and which

17 H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943; 2d ed., 1971), pp. 147–48.

18 Wilhelm Eilers, "Stern – Planet – Regenbogen," in Wilhelm Hoenerbach, ed., *Der Orient in der Forschung. Festschrift für Otto Spies* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), pp. 112–16.

19 *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.9 (TD² MS. 53.15–54.7): *ēn abāxtarān ... hamāg rāyēnišn ī āwām ciyōn be ō axtarān ciyōn cašm-dīd paydāg wišōbēnd. ud ul frōdēnd ud kast* ⁺*abzōn kunēnd. u-šān rawišn-īz nē ciyōn axtarān cē hast ka tēz hast ī dagrand ud hast ka abāz rawišn hast ka estādag hēd*. This passage has been much discussed, as has the chapter in which it occurs. Inter alia, see the painstaking philological work of D.N. MacKenzie, "Zoroastrian Astrology in the Bundahišn," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27 (1964): 511–29.

20 *Greater Bundahišn* 6H.0 (TD² MS. 70.12–13): "the lying planets," *druzān abāxtarān*.

21 *Greater Bundahišn* 5.4 (TD² MS. 50.1): "the most destructive planets," *murnjēnītarān abāxtarān*.

22 *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.9 (TD² MS. 54.15): "they are demons," *dēw hēnd*.

23 *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.9 (TD² MS. 54.15): "maker of old age and harm," *zarmānīh ud anāgīh kardār*.

24 *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.9 (TD² MS. 54.8–11): "This light of [the planets] is revealed to be the same light of Ohrmazdean creatures, in the same manner of evil men who are dressed in soldiers' uniforms or like the light in the eyes of vermin," *u-šān ēn rošnīh u-š paydāg ham-rošnīh ī Ōhrmazdīg handāzag wattarān kē paymōzan ī spāh paymōz hēnd ciyōn rošnīh andar cašm ī xrafstarān*. Cf. *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.21–27.

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suggests a physically-and-morally defective locomotion that can be awkward, violent, crooked, or suspicious: scuttling, slithering, scurrying, or the like.[25] Second, given a folk etymological derivation of the word *abāxtarān* ("planet") from the verb *baxtan* ("to distribute") with a negative prefix (*a-*), the planets were described as non-distributors or, more precisely, as beings antithetical to proper distribution, insofar as they give only bad things – death, disease, misfortune, and the like[26] – or, alternatively, they steal good things from the signs of the zodiac and give them "not to dutiful worthies, but to evil-doers, undutiful persons, prostitutes, whores, and unworthy types."[27] Further word-play constituted the planets (*ab-āxtarān*) as the opposite of zodiacal constellations (*nē axtarān*),[28] the latter now being understood as the "goodness-distributor deities."[29] Making matters more complex still, a homonymous noun *abāxtar* denotes the northern direction or quarter, north being perceived as "*backwards*" in Iran because standard orientation was facing the south, the direction of warmth, light, and the gods, while north – the backwards direction – was associated with cold, death, and demons.[30]

Here, one perceives the gradual elaboration of a dense and complex symbolic construct, the general nature of which was determined at the start. All begins with the observation of planetary retrograde motion, which is taken to be aberrant, disquieting, demonic. This led to a naming operation, as planets were designated *abāxtarān*, "the backward ones." Tendentious rumination

25 *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.3 (TD² MS. 52.1) and 27.52 (TD² MS. 188.2), *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.30.

26 *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.17, 8.20.

27 *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.27: *nē ō xwēškārān arzānīgān bē ō wināhkārān axwēškārān jēhān rōspīgān anarzānīgān baxšēnd ud dahēnd*. Cf. *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 12.8–10, conceivably also *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.44.

28 *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.9 (TD² MS. 54.7–8): "The planets (*abāxtarān*) are thus named 'non-zodiacal constellations (*nē axtarān*)'," *u-šān abāxtarān namīh ēd hast nē axtarān hēnd*.

29 *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.7: *bagān ī nēkīh baxtārān*. Cf. *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.17, 12.8–10, *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.5–10, conceivably also *Greater Bundahišn* 26.32 (TD² MS. 166.12–15). The opposition of planets and zodiacal constellations is thematized at *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.17–21, 12.7, *Greater Bundahišn* 4.27 (TD² MS. 45.6–8), 5.4 (TD² MS. 49.15–50.7), 5A.3 (TD² MS. 51.14–52.7), 5A.9 (TD² MS. 53.15–54.8), and 6H (TD² MS. 70.12–71.1).

30 As the name of a cardinal direction, Pahlavi *abāxtar* derives from Avestan *apāxtara-*, on which see Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, reprint ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1961; original 1904), cols. 79–80 and texts like *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.1: "From the northern side, from the northern regions, the Evil Spirit scurried forth, he of many deaths, the demon of all demons" *apāxtarat haca naēmāt apāxtaraēibiiō haca naēmaēibiiō fraduuarat aŋrō mainiiuš pouru.mahrkō daēuuanąm daēuuō*. Cf. *Hādōxt Nask* 2.25, *Vīdaēuudāt* 7.2, 8.16, and such Pahlavi texts as *Zād Spram* 30.48, 30.51, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 24.5, 32.6, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 31a2, 31c8, 45.1, 58.63, *Supplementary texts to the Šāyest nē-Šāyest* 12.18, 14.2, and *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* 22.20–23.2.

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on the significance of that name then produced other associations, through which the planets were imagined to be demonic in nature, anti-distributors (*a-baxtarān*), and antithetical to the zodiacal constellations (*axtarān*), who, in the most pointed contrast, move only in orderly circles and only distribute good things to good people. All of these binary contrasts were then brought into alignment with countless others, when the signs of the zodiac were cast as Ohrmazd's heavenly generals, with the planets doing similar service for Ahriman.

> All goodness and its opposite come to people and other creatures via the seven (planets) and the twelve zodiacal constellations. As is said in the Religion, the twelve zodiacal constellations are twelve generals on the Wise Lord's side; the seven planets are seven generals on the side of the Evil Spirit. Those seven planets damage all creatures and creation and consign them to death and every sort of evil, as those twelve zodiacal constellations and seven planets command and arrange the world.[31]

4

Having arrived at this understanding of what the planets are, Sassanian cosmologists faced the task of explaining how they came to be so. Toward that end, they developed four different theoretical constructs, three of which drew on older Iranian traditions, while the fourth was imported from India. First and simplest was the assertion that Ahriman created the planets, with the possible implication – never rendered fully explicit – that their ominous form of motion is an inheritance from their creator, for whom the verb *dwāristan* is also commonly used.[32] Second was the attempt to build on the analysis of

31 *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 8.17–21: *harw nēkīh ud juttarīh ī ō mardōmān ud* +*abārīg-īz dāmān rasēd pad 7-ān ud 12-ān rasēd. 12 axtar ciyōn pad dēn 12 spāhbēd ī az kustag ī Ōhrmazd ān 7 abāxtar 7 spāhbēd ī az kustag ī Ahreman guft estēd. ud harwisp dām ud dahišn ōy 7 abāxtarān tarwēnēnd ud ō margīh ud harw anāgih abespārēnēnd. ud ciyōn awēšān 12 axt*[*arān*] *ud 7 abāxtar*[*ān*] *brēhēnāg ud rāyēnāg ī <ud rāyēnāg ī> gēhān hēnd.* Cf. *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 12.4–10.

32 *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 12.7: "Then the Evil Spirit created the seven planets that are said to be like generals of the Evil Spirit, to take and destroy that goodness from the Wise Lord's creatures by assault on the sun, moon, and twelve zodiacal constellations," *ud pas Ahreman ān 7 abāxtar ciyōn 7 spāhbed ī Ahreman guft estēd pad wišuft bē stadan ān nēkīh az dāmān ī Ōhrmazd pad petyāragīh ī mihr ud māh ud awēšān 12 axtarān dād.* Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 4.27 (TD^2 MS. 45.5–10). The verb *dwāristan* is regularly used of Ahriman, as, for instance, in descriptions of his motion toward Ohrmazd's creation, when he launched his primordial assault. Thus, *Greater Bundahišn* 4.10 (TD^2 MS. 42.4), *Dēnkart* 5.24.3, *Zād Spram* 3.7.

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Yašt 8.8, which we considered above, and to associate planets with meteors, comets, and other heavenly bodies whose motion is unpredictable, disruptive, or irregular. As we saw, the Avestan passage described shooting stars as "witches (*pairikās*), who hover between earth and sky,"[33] and the Pahlavi texts expanded on this terminology, referring to planets as "sorcerors" (*yadūgān*), the constant companions of "witches" (Pahl. *parīgān* < Av. *pairikā-*), both of whom are given to demonic patterns of movement.[34]

A third line of analysis took its lead from *Yašt* 13.57–58 and its idea that the heavenly bodies were originally motionless until the perfect peace of creation was disrupted by Ahriman's assault. As we saw, that text imagined that the discrete, measured time of history commenced when the sun, moon, and stars started rotating, history being understood as a long, but finite era situated between the very different temporality of primordial and final eternities. Going further still, a number of Pahlavi texts added a complementary analysis of spatial categories. Thus, having launched his assault from the lowest depths of "endless darkness," Ahriman is said to have crossed the void and moved toward the heavens that culminate in Ohrmazd's realm of "endless light."[35] At the pinnacle of his success, the Evil Spirit actually invaded the lower portions of the heavens, where he seized some of the stars, and he dragged these down into the void when he was forced to retreat. Three texts preserve different versions of this story. The relations among the variants are shown in Table 13.3.

---

33 *Yašt* 8.8: *pairikå ... yå stārō kərəmå patanti antarə ząm asmanəmca.*

34 *Škend Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.9–10: "The seven stars and the witches-cum-shooting stars (*parīgān*) who slither (*dwārēnd*) beneath them are thieves who distribute in antagonistic fashion. The religion names them sorcerors (*yadūgān*)," *ud haftān stār karbān parīgān ī azēr awēšān dwārēnd appurdārān ī jud-baxtārān kē-šān dēnīg nām yadūgān*. Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 5.4 (TD^2 MS. 49.12–50.7), 5A.6–7 (TD^2 MS. 53.1–9), 27.52 (TD^2 MS. 188.2–4).

35 The basic cosmology is sketched out in *Greater Bundahišn* 1–5 (TD^2 MS. 2.11–3.5):

> It is revealed thus in the good religion: Ohrmazd is highest in omniscience and goodness, for infinite time always exists in the light. That light is the seat and place of Ohrmazd, which one calls 'Endless Light.' Omniscience and goodness exist in infinite time, just as Ohrmazd, his place and religion exist in the time of Ohrmazd. Ahriman exists in darkness, with total ignorance and love of destruction, in the depths. His crude love of destruction and that place of darkness are what one calls 'Endless Darkness.' Between them a Void existed.
>
> *pad weh dēn owōn paydāg, Ohrmazd bālistīg pad harwisp āgāhīh ud wehīh zamān ī akanārag andar rōšnīh hamē būd. ān rōšnīh gāh ud gyāg ī Ohrmazd hast kē asar rōšnīh gōwēd. ān harwisp āgāhīh ud wehīh zamān ī akanārag ciyōn Ohrmazd wehīh ud dēn zamān i Ohrmazd būd hēnd. Ahriman andar tārigīh pad pas-dānišnīh ud zadār-kāmagīh zofr-pāyag būd. uš zadār-kāmagīh xām ud ān tārigīh gyāg hast kē asar tārigīh gōwēd. u-šān mayān tuhīgīh būd hast.*

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TABLE 13.3 The Evil Spirit's assault on the stars

Zād Spram 1.31–33	*Greater Bundahišn 4.10*	*Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār 4.16*
At the same time the Evil Spirit, together with his associated powers, came to the star station. *pad ham zamān Ahriman az ham-zō<h>rān ham-mis bē ō star pāyag āmad.*	Then the Evil Spirit, together with powerful demons, came against the lights. *pas +ayēd Gannag Mēnōg abāg hammis dēwān abzārān ō padīragīh rōšnān.* He saw the sky, which was shown to him spiritually, even if it was still not created in bodily/material fashion. *dīd ān-išn mēnōgīhā nimūd ka nē astōmand dād estēd.*	as the Lie leapt toward his lights *ciyōn-īš ōy druz ō rōšnān frazast*
The base of the sky is kept in the star station. *bun ī asmān ī pad star pāyag +dāšt.*	Enviously and desirously, he attacked the sky, which stood in the star station. *arēšk kāmagīha tag abar kard asmān pad +star pāyag estād.*	
He pulled it out from there to the void, outside the foundation of the lights and darknesses, *az anōh frōd ō tuhīgīh āhixt ī +bērōn ī buništ ī rōšnān ud tārān*	He led it down to the void, which, as I wrote at the beginning, was between the foundation of the lights and the darknesses. *frōd ō ī tuhīgīh haxt ahy-m ī pad bun nipišt kū andarag ī buništag ī rōšnān ud tomīgān būd.*	
to the place of battle, where there is the motion of both. *ud gyāg ī ardīg kē-š tazišn ī harw dōān pad-iš.*		

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TABLE 13.3 The Evil Spirit's assault on the stars (*cont.*)

Zād Spram 1.31–33	*Greater Bundahišn 4.10*	*Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār 4.16*
And that darkness he kept with himself, he brought that to the sky. *u-š tārīgīh ī abāg xwēš* $^{+}$*dāšt andar ō asmān āwurd.*		and he was ensnared, so that all his powers and instruments, sins and lies of many species, are not left to pursue individually the accomplishment of their own desire, they are mixed with the material existence of the lights, *ud pēcīd adag-īš hamāg zōrān abzārān āšān bazagān druzān ī was-sardag jud-jud pad xwēš kāmišnkārīh nē hištan rāy hast ī ō gētīh ī rōšnān gumēxtag*
The sky was pulled so far into darkness that within the vault of the sky, just one third reached above the star station. *asmān ōwōn ō tom āhixt kū andarōn ī aškōb ī asmān cand 3 ēk-ē azabar star pāyag bē rasēd.*	He stood as if one third above the star station, from inside the sky. *owōn kū abar azabar ī* $^{+}$*star payāg az andarōn asmān tā 1/3 be estād.*	

As a result of this, both void and stars are transformed. The void now receives matter, and becomes a mixture of matter and nothingness, being and non-being, light and darkness, a spatial complement to historic time. In similar fashion, the displaced celestial bodies that previously were the lower stars now become planets, which stagger and lurch as they move, having initially been set in motion by the violence of the Evil Spirit. In their new domain these are entities of decidedly ambiguous character: matter out of place, alternating unpredictably between backward and forward motion (Table 13.4).

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TABLE 13.4 Parallel analyses of time and space in Avestan and Pahlavi sources

	Yašt 8.8: ***Analysis of Time***	***Greater Bundahišn 4.10 et al.*** ***Analysis of Space***
Bracketing domains of infinite, but unidirectional extent	Primordial eternity (open to beginnings) and Eschatological eternity (open to end)	Endless light (open to the above) and Endless darkness (open to the below)
Intermediate zone, bounded in both directions	Historic time, which begins with the demonic assault and ends with the Renovation (*frašō.kərəti*)	Primordial void (*tuhīgīh*), situated beneath the realm of endless light and above that of endless darkness
Definitive role of celestial bodies with regard to the intermediate zone	Historic time begins when sun, moon, and stars begin to rotate, having been set in motion by the demonic assault	The void becomes intermediate space, characterized by mixture, when Ahriman drags the lower stars down from the heavens to this zone, where they become planets

If this last narrative construed the planets as originally having been Ohrmazdean creations, but regrettably corrupted by Ahriman's acts, a final theory inverted this image. Here, the planets are Ahrimanian in origin, thus intrinsically threatening and evil. Their retrograde orbits, far from being the product of the Evil Spirit's aggression, reflect Ohrmazd's efforts to keep their sinister power under control. Thus, making use of astronomical imagery developed in India, certain Sassanian cosmologists imagined that the Wise Lord used a set of cords to rein in the unruly planets.[36]

> And the Creator, the Wise Lord, in order not to abandon these five planets to their own desires, tied each of them with two cords to the sun and moon, and that is the cause of their forward-motion and backward-motion. The length of some is longer, like Saturn and Jupiter; that of others lesser, like Mercury and Venus. When they get to the end of the cord,

36 Most fully on the theory of celestial cords and its historic diffusion, see Antonio Panaino, *Tessere il Cielo. Considerazioni sulle Tavole astronomiche, gli Oroscopi, e la Dottrina dei Legamenti tra Induismo, Zoroastrismo, Manicheismo e Mandeismo* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1998).

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then they are pulled back. They are not permitted to go according to their own desires, so that they do not damage the creation.[37]

5

The Zoroastrian tradition represented in the Pahlavi books apparently saw no need to adjudicate among these theories, which were not rivals in any serious sense, merely alternative ways to explain a phenomenon sufficiently fascinating and troublesome to have stimulated a wide range of speculation. Clearly, when information regarding the retrograde motion of planets was introduced to the Sassanian court, it prompted interest, discussion, and ferment. It did not, however, occasion crisis in anything approximating Kuhn's sense. The question is: Why not? At a certain level, this seemingly simple question begs for a general theory of the difference between those styles of cosmology we are inclined to call "religious" and those we regard as "scientific": a topic much too vast for the current context. And yet there are a few observations we can make that offer significant insight into the broader question.

Here, I would begin by observing how a cosmology that includes a robust category of the demonic is able to treat aberrant phenomena with no apparent sense of crisis and, what is more, can accommodate such data in ways that actually make them ratify its basic assumptions. Confronted with evidence of celestial bodies that moved in a weird, disquieting fashion, Sassanian cosmologists thus explored various explanatory options, all of which constituted the planets' retrograde motion as one more example of the well-known fact that Ahriman's aggression has disrupted the perfect order of Ohrmazd's creation. Rather than challenging or destabilizing this first principle of Zoroastrian orthodoxy, retrograde motion was made to validate and support it. With modest ingenuity, knowledgeable experts can disarm and appropriate virtually any peculiarity by consigning it to the category of "the demonic," just as a robust category of the miraculous does similar service in other styles of cosmology.[38]

37 *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār* 4.39–44: *ud ēn 5 abāxtar dādār Ōhrmazd xwēš-kāmagīhā nē hištan rāy harw ēk pad 2 zīh ō Mihr ud Māh bast estēnd. u-šān frāz-rawišnīh ud abāz-rawišnīh az ham cim, hast kē-š drahnāy ī ān ī drāztar ciyōn Kēwān ud Ōhrmazd, ud hast ē kāstar ciyōn Tīr ud Anāhīd, harw ka ō abdom ī zīh šawēnd pad pas abāz āhanjēnd. u-šān xwēš-kāmagīhā raftan nē hilēnd.* Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 5A.6–8 (TD^2 MS. 53.1–14), which includes calculations taken directly from Indian sources.

38 The classic study of Zoroastrian demonology remains Arthur Christensen, *Essai sur la démonologie iranienne* (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1941). For the nature of demonology as a systematic discourse that played a role of great importance in Europe through

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If this is so, one might imagine it is only among groups within which appeals to the demonic and the miraculous are no longer attractive that aberrant phenomena can be constituted as "anomalies," in Kuhn's sense of the term, i.e. phenomena that may seem unnatural only because one's understanding of them – and of nature – is somehow defective and in need of correction. A double restructuring of the category of "nature" thus separates Brahe and Kepler from the authors of the *Bundahišn*, *Škēnd Gūmanīg Wizār*, and *Mēnōg ī Xrad* and makes possible the emergence of that which we now call "science." In the first place, the category of nature expands to encompass all that previously lay outside its grasp in such privileged categories as the miraculous and the supernatural. In the second place, this category contracts to deny the reality of all that was previously placed – or place-able – in its own specialized subcategory of the demonic, and now demands that these phenomena be explained by the same principles that govern the rest of nature.

The shift from a "religious" to a "scientific" regime of truth thus involves and depends on revisions in the categories of the miraculous, the demonic, and the natural.[39] Beyond this, one must note the increased importance of empirical observation, mathematical calculation, significant changes in the protocols of research and theory, also in the economy of prestige and politics of reputation within the sciences, such that innovation, discovery, challenges to authority and to tradition, paradigm shift, individual genius, and scientific revolution all came to be positively valorized. What is more, the emergent value of *novelty* in all these forms came to be endowed with a set of mythologies, like the good story of Brahe and Kepler, wherein the great destabilizers are treated as heroic figures who opened the way to better, higher, newer, truer, purer, surer Knowledge. Or, to put it differently, stories in which the wobbly, anomalous, retrograde planets appear not as demons, but as saviors. At the same time, older stories, such as those in which the orderly rotation of the zodiacal constellations figured as signs of divine perfection, benevolence, and harmonious order now go largely untold. Lacking anomalies, surprise, and novelty, they hold little dramatic interest, and accordingly are consigned to children's literature and the tedium of "normal science."

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the 17th century, see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

39 On the way revised understandings of natural philosophy as a part of religious discourse paved the way for crucial developments in the history of science, see now Stephen Gaukroger, *The Emergence of a Scientific Culture: Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 1210–1685* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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CHAPTER 14

Of Dirt, Diet, and Religious Others: A Theme in Zoroastrian Thought

1

In an intriguing article, Touraj Daryaee brought together a number of highly significant texts in which Zoroastrians normalized their own food preferences, while exaggerating, distorting, and stigmatizing those of their ethnic others.[1] To adapt the well-known concept of Walter Benjamin, it is a splendid example of the aestheticization, not just of political attitudes and relations, but of morality, collective identity, and social hierarchy as well.[2] The practice, moreover, is all too familiar, as witness the Anglo-Saxon propensity to mock the French as "frogs," Germans as "krauts," Italians as spaghetti- or garlic-eaters.[3]

The choice of food as a vehicle for operations of this sort has a certain genius about it. Although groups' choices of what is – and is not – good-to-eat reflect environmental conditions (climate, soil quality, availability of specific plants and animals), they are also conditioned by the technologies that transform raw materials into cuisine (methods of cooking, spices and condiments, utensils, service equipment, and etiquette). Differences in diet thus reflect – and permit one to theorize – difference between peoples as something initially based in nature, but greatly amplified by the workings of culture. Further, given the ubiquity and crucial import of the homology {Raw : Cooked :: Nature : Culture}, any group can characterize others as less cultured than themselves – i.e. closer to nature, more animal, less human, and less worthy – by denigrating their favored foods and cooking practices.[4]

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1 This chapter was originally published in *Dabir* 1 (2015): 44–52. Touraj Daryaee, "Food, Purity and Pollution: Zoroastrian Views on the Eating Habits of Others," *Iranian Studies* 45 (2012): 229–42.

2 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Michael W. Jennings, general editor, *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings. Vol. 4: 1938–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 251–83.

3 More broadly on this general theme, see, inter alia, Igor de Garine, "Views about food prejudice and stereotypes," *Social Science Information* 40 (2001): 487–507.

4 In addition to Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), also relevant is Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

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When judgments about groups of people are rendered via criticism of their food, it is not just food that is at issue, but more importantly taste and values. Going further, one can also frame this as a religious issue, as when one defines one's own diet as pure and someone else's as polluted, resituating the question on a plane beyond that of merely human preferences. To construe one's diet as not just "tastier," but purer and more sacred than that of one's adversaries, is not as easy as it might seem. Indeed, it implies a whole cosmology.

2

For the most part, when medieval Zoroastrian authors pick quarrels over diet, they tend to deride Arabs and others for eating lizards, snakes, worms, and/or mice.[5] As Daryaee rightly observes, Zoroastrians classified these species as *xrafstarān* ("vermin, noxious creatures"), in pointed contrast to those they categorized as *gōspandān* ("beneficent animals; pacific, productive, domestic creatures").[6] Not only did animals of the two types differ sharply in their appearance, habits and habitats, they were theorized as having been utterly different *ab origine*. Thus, *gōspandān* descended from the first animal created by the Wise Lord, second in dignity only to the original human.[7]

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5 These include Ferdowsi, *Shāhnāmeh* 8:423 (in the edition of Jalāl Khāleqi Motalq, New York, 1987–2009), Abu 'Ali Mohammad Bal'ami, *Tārikh-nāmeh-ye Tabari* 3: 445 (in the edition of Mohammad Rowshan, Tehran, 1380/2001), Nāser-e Khosrow, *Safar-nāmeh-ye Nāser-e Khosroh,* p. 143 (in the edition of Mohammad Dabir-Sāyāqi, Tehran, 1356/1977), and the *Ayādkār ī Jāmāspīg*, p. 52 (in the edition of Giuseppe Messina, Rome, 1939).

6 For the fullest discussion of *xrafstarān*, see *Greater Bundhišn* 22. The species listed include snakes, scorpions, lizards, ants, flies, locusts, frogs, dragons, vipers, tortoises, worms, wasps, mosquitoes, and fleas. The following is presented by way of general description.

> Their material being, the light of their eyes, and the breath of their vital spirit are Ohrmazdean and their spirit of sinfulness, and malevolence are that of the Evil Spirit. This is greatly advantageous: When people see them, they kill them or they avoid them. It is revealed that they are not the creation of the Wise Lord, for their hateful form and color are not at all like those of (his) domestic animals (*gōspandān*) or wild ones. The appearance of their scurrying motion and the harm they do at night, due to their having the same substance with darkness, is proof of their fear, harm, and smiting, and they do not cease from doing harm to the creatures. (*Greater Bundahišn* 22.4–6).
>
> *u-šān stī ud rōšnīh ī čašm ud wād ī gyānīg ī Ohrmazdig az ān ī čiyōn andar gēhān u-š waxš ī bazagīh ud wad-kāmagīh ān ī Ahreman. ēn-iz meh-sūdīh kū tā ka-šān wēnēnd ōzanēnd ayāb az-iš pahrēzēnd. az-iz ēn paydāg kē nē dahišn ī Ohrmazd hēnd cē-šān* $^{+}$*a-grāmīg kirb ud gōnag ō gōspandān dadān nē homānāg. u-šān dwārišnīh ud paydāgīh ud wizand-kunišnīh pad šab ham gōhrīh abāg tārigīh rāy ud pad uzmāyišn ī bīm ud wizend ud zanišn ud az wizendkārīh ī dāmān nē estēnd.*

7 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.53, 1a.4, 1a.17, 2.9, 3.17, 4a.1–6, 6e.1–6, 13.4–31, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 46.15, 46.22–27, *Zād Spram* 1.25, 3.50–66.

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Accordingly, their utterly benign nature reflects the primordial perfection of their ancestor and the absolute goodness of the Creator. Nowhere was this goodness more evident than in the milk of these animals, which conveys the ideal, life-sustaining qualities of moisture, warmth, and light to those who consume it. Numerous texts describe milk as the best of foods, capable of fulfilling all mortal needs and one should also note that, in contrast to most other foods, milk is obtained without causing death to any plant or animal.[8] Infants subsist on milk alone,[9] as did the first-born humans.[10] Souls are greeted with milk (or butter) as they enter paradise,[11] and when the world's perfection is restored, people will return to an all-milk diet, then renounce food altogether.[12]

Xrafstarān, in contrast, are creatures of Ahriman, whom the Evil Spirit produced from his own darkness.[13] His purpose in this was as malevolent as Ohrmazd's was benign, for he made the teeming, swarming, gnawing, dark-colored, slimy species that give no milk (flies, mosquitoes, ants, frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, worms, maggots, etc.) to serve as shock troops in his assault on the Wise Lord's good creation.[14] Once created, such species multiply rapidly and contaminate all they contact, reproducing themselves in ordure and rotting flesh.[15] These animals, then, are the embodiment of the Ahrimanian qualities: malice, envy, ignorance, appetite, greed, immoderation, multiplicity, and an absolute rage for destruction. They are, in brief, the assaultive powers of decay and corrosion, instantiated at the animal level.

It is a truism that eaters remake their bodies – and selves – from the material they have eaten. Accordingly, those who feed on *gōspandān* (above all, their milk) become more Ohrmazdian as a result: benevolent, generous, and life-sustaining. Conversely, those who eat *xrafstarān* become dark, noxious, Ahrimanian.[16] The *Dēnkard* summarizes these dietary principles, without reference to issues of ethnicity.

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8 *Greater Bundahišn* 4.20–21, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 30.13, *Dēnkard* 3.374, 5.14.4, 7.2.40–42, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* 16.4–12, *Zād Spram* 30.58.

9 *Greater Bundahišn* 15.11, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 27.2, *Zād Spram* 10.11.

10 *Greater Bundahišn* 14.17–20, 34.1.

11 *Greater Bundahišn* 30.13, *Hādōxt Nask* 2.18, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 30.12–13, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 23.15–17.

12 *Greater Bundahišn* 34.2–3, *Dēnkard* 7.10.4, 7.10.8–9, *Zād Spram* 34.39–41, 35.15.

13 *Greater Bundahišn* 1.46.

14 *Greater Bundahišn* 4.15, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.40.

15 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 16.10 and 17.2.

16 Note, for instance, that sinners in hell are fed "the filthiest, most polluted food of the foods served in hell. They bring them the poison and venom of snakes, scorpions, and the other vermin in hell." *bē-š awiš barēd rēmtom* ⁺*nasruštartom az xwarišnān xwarišn ī pad dušōx*

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> Concerning food: The foods that are worthy of one's self, proportionately suitable, pure, moderate, *which are productive and advantageous for the world*, and which the body desires are water, plants, edible fruit, and according to ancient laws, meat from the five species of beneficent animals (*gōspandān*) when prepared according to law (except for three birds: the mountain buzzard, black crow, and vulture); also milk from those animals, pure intoxicating drinks, non-intoxicating ones, and other liquids that are acceptable in food. Non-foods are: All that brings sickness back to food, like the flesh of a person, dog, or fox, other corpse-matter, vermin (*xrafstarān*), all bodily refuse, poisons, and everything that is polluted or harmful.[17]

3

Beyond the contrast of milk and vermin, there is another argument to which Daryaee gave less attention, perhaps because its logic seems self-explanatory. This appears in the first item in the dossier he assembled: a passage from the *Rivāyat of Farnbag-Srōš*, which he translates as follows.

> Question: "What is the judgment in regard to buying bread and meat and other prepared foods from the market of other religions?"
>
> Answer: "(If) food preparation is done by those of other religions, due to having excrement on it or preparing it uncooked, it is unauthorized to eat."[18]

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frawārd estēd. āwarēnd wiš ud zahr ī mār ud gazdum ud abārīg-iz xrafstar ī pad dušox. (*Mēnōg ī Xrad* 2.190–91).

17 *Dēnkard* 5.14.1–6 (Madan 446.13–22; B Manuscript [Dresden] 348.13–20): *abar xwarišn kū ān ī xwēš arzānīgīhā ud niyābag-bahrīhā ud pāk pad paymānag* ***ud kār ud sūd ī gēhān*** *aziš tan-kāmīh hast ī āb ud urwar ud bar ī xwarišnīg ud pad meh-dādestānīh az gōšt ī panj ēwēnag gōspand*[*ān*] *+sardag jud az ān se murw ī ast sār ī gar ud warāγ ī syā ud dālman ka 'psptwy'k* (*?*) *dādīhā ud pēm ī awēšān gōspandān ud māyēnišnān ī pāk a-mastīhā ud abārīg ī pad xwarišn mehmān. an-xwarišn kū harw čē ō xwarišn abāz waštag čiyōn pid ī mardōm sag ud rōbāh abārīg nasā ud xrafstarān ud hāmist +hixrīhā ud zahrīhā ud hangirdig harw čē rēman ayāb zyāngār.*

18 *Rivāyat ī Farnbag-Srōš* 25: *pursišn: nān ud gōst ud abārīg-iz xwarišn ī sāxtag ī az wāzār ī jud-dēnān xrīd dādestān cē? passox: xwarišn ī sāxtag ī jud-dēnān sāzēnd hixromandīhā padiš be awizīrišnīh ayāb pad a-poxdagīh ī sāxtand nē padixšāy xwardan,* following Daryaee's transliteration.

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While this translation captures the general sense of the text, there are two points where it could be more literal and more revealing. First, Daryaee reads *hixrōmandīhā* where the Pahlavi text, as edited by B.T. Anklesaria, clearly has *hixrōmandīh* (as Anklesaria recognized).[19] The word is thus not an adverb in *-īhā,* but an abstract noun in *-īh* with adjectival extension in *-ōmand*, from the substantive *hixr*. Second, Daryaee's translation – like Anklesaria's – ignores *awizīrišnīh*, "inevitability, the state in which something is unavoidable." Taking these points into account and following the word order of the passage more faithfully yields a slightly different translation.

> Answer: "Prepared food that people of other religions prepare – inevitably there is the quality of *hixr* in it, or they prepare it in an uncooked state. It is not authorized to eat."

Regardless of these details, the answer given is clear. The food of religious others is pronounced unacceptable, as it is contaminated by *hixr*, a highly polluted and polluting substance. Daryaee translates this term as "excrement," as do many others, including the standard dictionary.[20] If this is correct, those aspects of Zoroastrian cosmology that deal with food, metabolism, digestion, defecation, and the needs of the body are brought into play. Here, several points are relevant.

First, the Wise Lord intended the original human to be perfect: immortal, unaging, not subject to disease or decay, and with no need of food.[21] Only with Ahriman's attack did hunger and the need to eat become part of the human condition, in correlation with and as partial antidote to the onset of

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19 B.T. Anklesaria, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat of Āturfarnbag and Farnbag-Srōš*, 2 vols. (Bombay: K.L. Bhargava & Co., 1969). The Pahlavi text is given at 1:94, Anklesaria's transliteration at 1:156 (with *hikhr-aumandīh*), and his translation at 2:137–38.

20 Thus, D.N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 43. The other standard dictionary – Henrik Samuel Nyberg, *A Manual of Pahlavi*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964–74) – has no listing for *hixr,* but renders *hixrīh* (*hihrēh*, in his orthography) as "impurity, filth" (2:100). With a few exceptions, on which see below, translators follow one or the other of these options.

21 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.4:

> Thus, the Creator of the world made the spiritual creation pure and undefiled. He made the material creation immortal, unaging, *without hunger*, without bondage, without sorrow, and without pain. [That remained the state of things] until there erupted in the darkness the Lie of wickedness …
>
> *ōh-iz dādār ī dahišn dād ān ī mēnōg dām abēzag anahōgēnēd ud ān-iz ī gētīgīg dām amarg ud a-zarmān ud* ***a-suyišn*** *ud abandišn abēš ud adard. tā ka candēd andar tom dušīh* [*ī*] *druz …*

Cf. *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.68, *Dēnkard* 3.80

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mortality.[22] The purpose of food, then, is to make life possible in the face of entropy and death, by renewing the body's material substance and supplying the Ohrmazdean qualities on which life depends.[23] Toward that end, the body converts food into vital energy and organic substance via the process of digestion, which is theorized as a sacred fire that burns in the human stomach. Food is this fire's fuel and continued life, its product.[24] Further, in the age of mixture (*gumēzišnīh*) introduced by the Evil Spirit's assault, food – like all matter – is no longer pure, but is adulterated with life-destroying "poison" (*wiš*) along with life-sustaining nutritive content.[25] Foods differ in the proportion of their

22 *Greater Bundahišn* 7.10:

> It says this too: "When death came over Gayōmard, first to his right foot, then to his little finger, the Foul Spirit scurried forth. *Then he set hunger on his heart. The Wise Lord stood there against the Foul Spirit so that he gave Gayōmard meat and butter to eat*, so that the demons would not dismember him through non-eating."

Note also that Hunger (*Suy* or *Suyišn*) and Appetite (*Āz*) are numbered among the demonic powers created by Ahriman to plague humanity. Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 4.19, 5.2–3, 27.33, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.39, *Zād Spram* 1.30, 34.32–33. Ironically, even Appetite is afflicted by hunger.

> *ēn-iz gōwēd kū ka ō Gayōmard margīh abar mad nazdist pad ān ī dašn pāy pad ān ī keh angust Gan(n)āg-Mēnōg frāz dwārist* ***pas ō dil gursagīh padiš frāz hišt. Ohrmazd <padīrag ī> Gan(n)āg-Mēnōg ānōh be estād tā-š gōšt ud rōγn ō Gayōmard xwārēnēd*** *kū tā-š dēwān pad a-xwarišnīh nē kirrēnēnd.*

Cf. *Dēnkard* 3.209, 3.317.

23 *Dēnkard* 3.157.8:

> Acts of preservation are for the help of one's (bodily) nature as they repel oppression from the Adversary. Preservation is food and drink, in order to join the power that is in food to the power in the elements for help of one's (bodily) nature.
>
> *ud dārišn ō ayārīh cihr pad awištāb spōzēnd az hamēstār. ud dārišn hast xwarišn ud xwārišn pad paywastan ī nērōg ī andar xwarišn ō nērōg ī pad āmēzišn ayārīh ī cihr.*

Cf. *Zād Spram* 29.4–6 and 30.23.

24 *Zād Spram* 3.79:

> The Promoter of good is the fire that is in people and animals. *Its proper function is to digest food*, to heat the body, and to make light stream from the eyes.
>
> *weh-franaftār ān ī andar mardōmān <ud> gōspandān* ***u-š xwarišn gugārdan*** *tan* ⁺*tāftan cašmān rōšēnīdan andar* ***xwēškārīh.***

Cf. *Zād Spram* 29.5, 30.23, 30.29, *Greater Bundahišn* 18.3.

25 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 36.40:

> At his original assault, the Lie assigned … the demon Grief *to poison foods* and to cause death, together with Deprivation, accustomed to secrecy, and fear-producing Terror, which cools the body's heat, and many destructive powers and very destructive demons.
>
> *ud* ⁺*Zarīz dēw* ***pad xwarišnān zahrēnidan*** *margīh wihānēnidan abāg Niyāz ī nihān rawišn ud Sahm bīm-kun ud xīndagīh tabišn afsār ud was wināhišnīg* ⁺*zōrān wināhatārān dēwān.*

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nutritious and poisonous components and this ratio determines the extent to which they are salubrious and fit for consumption.

Finally, we get to the point of most immediate relevance. The metabolic process of the digestive fire breaks food down into its component parts. Good Ohrmazdean content is converted into blood and circulated through the body to sustain its warmth, life-breath, senses, and vital energy.[26] Toxic Ahrimanian substance is expelled by the process of defecation, before it can do grievous harm. As the *Bundahišn* puts it:

> Just as in material existence, people commit sins and good deeds and when someone dies, they calculate his sins and good deeds – all those who are pure go to heaven and all those who are liars are thrown into hell. So also when people eat food, all that is good goes to the brain and becomes pure blood. And it arrives at the liver and all the body's power comes into being from it. All the admixture of poison goes from the stomach to the intestine and it evacuates through the seat, which is like hell.[27]

Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 4.17–18, 16.2, 22.1, 27.10–11, *Dēnkard* 3.325, 3.317, and *Škend Gumanīg Wizār* 4.17–19.

26 *Zād Spram* 29.6:

> The stomach is analogous to the cauldron that holds food and water inside. By the fire of the life-breath, they are properly heated. When these are heated to their limit, they are drawn to the liver by a natural force, luminous and powerful. From the liver it is sent by the veins and capillaries to the head and other parts of the body. In the brain, it becomes the eyes' ability to see and the other senses. Hands and feet also receive their strength from it, and the body shoves out that which is unnecessary, by its force of expulsion. The final exhalation of the life-breath is caused by not eating. The fire, which is like the life-breath, becomes weak, with similar cooling of hands and feet, when the fire goes up out of the heart and the whole body becomes cold. The separation of light from the eyes is also analogous to the cooling of the fire.
>
> *cē kumīg homānāgīh hast ī dēg <ī> xwarišn ud āb andarōn dārēd. pad* +*gyānīg ātaxš ēwēnīhā tābīhēd. ka ō sāmān ī xwēš mad pad zōr ī cihr ān ī rōšn ī zōrōmand be ō jagar āhanjēd. az jagar pad rāgān ud rāgizagān be ō sar ud abārīg tan rawēnēd ud abar mazg ī sar abzōn bawēd wēnāgīh ī cašmān ud abārīg šnāsagān aziš dast-iz pay aziš zōr padirēd ud ān ī an-abāyišnīg pad zōr ī spōzāgīh* [*ī*] *ō bērōn spōzēd. abdom frāz-widerišnīh ī gyān* [*ī*] *a-xwardārīh* +*wihān nizārīh <ī> gyānīg ātaxš az ham be afsardan ī dast ud pāy ud ul* +*uzidan ī <ātaxš> az dil sard* +*būdan ī {az} hamāg tan jud* +*būdan ī rōšnāgīh ī cašmān pad ham homānāgīh ī afsardan ī ātaxš.*

Cf. *Zād Spram* 3.79.

27 *Greater Bundahišn* 28.10: *owōn čiyōn andar gētīg mardōm wināh ud kirbag kunēnd ud ka mīrēd wināh ud kirbag āmārēnēnd har*(*w*) *čē abēzag ō garōdmān šawēd ud har*(*w*) *čē druwand ō dušox abganēnd. hamgōnag mardōm-iz xwarišn ī xwarēnd har*(*w*) *čē abēzag ō mazg ī sar šawēd ud xōn ī pāk bawēd ud ō jagar rasēd hamāg tan nērōg aziš bawēd. har*(*w*) *čē wēš gumēxtag az kumīg ō rōdīg šawēd ī pad nišēm bērōn abganēd ī handāzag ī dušox.* Cf.

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This passage presents a complex analogy of a sort common in Pahlavi texts, identifying a common pattern in two seemingly distant domains, then working out their parallel details. Starting from the observation that post mortem judgment of souls sends the good ones up and the bad ones down, the stomach is seen to perform a correspondingly vertical act of discrimination, sending the Ohrmazdean parts of food up to the brain in the form of blood, while shoving its Ahrimanian poisons down and out the anus in the form of faeces (Table 14.1). Theorized thus, digestion becomes an eminently religious, cosmic, and moral business. Excrement here figures simultaneously as 1) the material counterpart of a lying, corrupt, hell-bound soul, 2) the antithesis of proper food, and 3) the dark, foul stuff of death and decay.[28] And those who would eat excrement, even if unwittingly, not only invert the proper order of digestion, they obstruct the Creator's plans for the cosmos.

There is, however, a problem in connecting this passage too quickly with that taken from the *Rivāyat of Farnbag-Srōš*. First, the *Bundahišn* does not use the term *hixr* to denote excrement, neither here nor elsewhere.[29] Second, Pahlavi has a number of other words for excrement (*gūh, ṙiyišn*, *sargēn*), some of which occur in passages that distinguish this substance from *hixr*.[30] Given this, it seems appropriate to reconsider translation of the latter term.

4

Around the turn of the twentieth century, James Darmesteter and Christian Bartholomae, two giants in the study of Iranian philology sought to establish

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Zād Spram 30.30, where defecation is compared to a broom that sweeps dirt (i.e. useless, unwanted, and polluting matter) out of a dwelling.

28 Cf. *Dēnkard* 3.235, where the stench of excrement is said to derive "from a mixture of poison and dead-matter, and the pollution in it" (*gand az wiš ud hixr abar gumēzigīh ud padiš rēmanīh*) and *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 23.35–36, where Ahriman decides that upon their arrival in hell, liars will be fed with "the stench that is freshly shat" (*gand … ī nōg rīd*).

29 *Hixr* is attested in two *Bundahišn* passages only, *Greater Bundahišn* 5.3 and 11c.2. In both, it denotes something defiled and dangerous, but nothing in either text suggests whether it is a specific substance (and if so, what?) or a general category.

30 E.g. *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* 49.1: "And I saw the soul of a man who constantly devoured *gūh* (excrement), *hixr*, *nasā* (corpse-matter), and the *rēman* (filth) of people. *u-m dīd ruwān ī mard-ē(w) cand kē-šān gūh ud hixr ud nasā ud rēman ī mardōmān hamē jūd*. Cf. *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 18e.6–8, which similarly differentiates *nasā, hixr,* and *sargēn*, ranking their their level of pollution in that serial order. Interestingly, dung (*sargēn*) is there said to possess the quality of *hixr* (*sargēn ī hixrōmand*).

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TABLE 14.1 Homology of Judgment of the Dead and Digestion, following *Greater Bundahišn* 28.10

	Ohrmazdean	**Ahrimanian**
Judgment of the Dead:		
State of the soul	Good deeds > Sins	Sins > Good deeds
a) Motion of the soul	Upward ascent	Thrown downward
b) End point achieved	Heaven	Hell
Digestion:		
a) Mixed content of food	All that is good	All poison (*wiš*)
b) Nature of food component	Nourishing, life-sustaining +Light/+Warm +Moist/+Fragrant	Life-destroying -Light/-Warm -Moist/-Fragrant
c) Motion of food component	Upward ascent	Thrown downward
d) First organ reached	Brain, at top of body	Intestine
e) Material refinement of food component	Blood	Feces
f) Second organ reached	Liver	Anus, at bottom of body
g) Ultimate effects	Production of all the body's power (*hamāg tan nērōg*), renewal of life	Expelled from body entirely, successful defense of body's health

that Pahlavi *hixr* and its Avestan antecedent (*hixra-*) denoted not excrement *per se*, but something more specific, i.e. ordure and bodily wastes that are particularly runny or liquid in nature.[31] In large measure, this view was based on etymological considerations, as the two nouns derive from a verbal root **haič-*, which means "to pour out, moisten."[32] Beyond that, their theory drew on

31 James Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* (Paris: Musée Guimet, 1892–93) 2: 71n32 ("l'impureté liquide du mort ou du vivant"), Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg: Karl Trübner, 1904), p. 1812 ("flüssiges Exkrement, flüssige Ausscheidung des Körpers"). This interpretation is still maintained in Shaul Shaked's *Middle Persian Dictionary Project*, ad loc., available at http://micro5.mscc.huji.ac.il/~msshaul/mpdp/main.php (last consulted 20 September 2012).

32 The etymology was suggested by Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* 2: 71n32 and adopted by Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, p. 1812. For the fullest discussion of the verb, see Johnny Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), pp. 127–28. Avestan *haēk-* is well attested, occuring with a variety of preverbs and in numerous contexts (for which see Bartholomae, pp. 1727–28). Pahlavi, however, preserves

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passages like the Pahlavi commentary to *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.1–4, a text that frames a question designed to fascinate the most subtle priestly intelligence. The story begins with a bird that eats the flesh of a dead man, then flies to a tree, where it vomits, defecates, and urinates on its branches. Another man then comes along and cuts down a branch from the tree. Failing to notice its soiled nature, he sets it aflame, thereby polluting the fire. What acts of atonement are prescribed for such an act and such a person?[33]

Appreciating the import of this passage begins with the recognition that it constructs a thought experiment to clarify the difference between two categories and levels of pollution that are often grouped together.[34] The first of these is the most contaminating and destructive of all material substances: the flesh of corpses in the process of organic decay, as a once-vital body moves through stages of rot and putrefaction on its way to non-being. Such substances are called *nasā*, literally "corpse-matter."[35] Slightly less severe than the pollution of *nasā* was that caused by vomit, feces, and urine (also some other forms of bodily refuse we will consider shortly). Collectively, these second-most-polluting substances were known as *hixr*. Depending on whether the soilage on the tree branch is classified as *nasā* (because it begins with a corpse) or *hixr* (because the immediate contaminating substances are bird vomit, feces, and urine), different levels of atonement would be required to rectify the woodcutter's error. The Avestan text does not give a definitive answer, but worries, rather pragmatically, that if the splotches on the wood are classified as corpse-matter, the world will then be so full of *nasā* as to be unbearably dangerous. The Pahlavi commentary pursues the question, citing the opinions offered by Abarag and Mēdōmah, authoritative sages who founded major schools of Zoroastrian

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the root only in one compound (*wiš-šinj-* "venom-spurting") and the verb *paššinjīdan, paššinj-* "to sprinkle," derived from *paiti-haēk-*.

33 For an up to date translation of this passage, along with the Pahlavi commentary, see Prods Oktor Skjærvø, ed. and trans., *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 226–27. Note, however, that at *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.1, where Skjærvø translates "It vomits, urinates, or defecates on it," suggesting that only one of these actions took place, the text actually states that all three occurred: *auui dim vanta auui dim irita auui dim patita* ("It vomits on that. It defecates on that. It urinates on that."). The Pahlavi translation preserves only the first of these actions: *abar ān wāmēd* ("It vomits on that").

34 *Nasā* and *hixr* are regularly mentioned together, connected by the particle *ud* ("and") to form a two-member set as the most important types of pollution (*rēman* or *rēmanīh*). See, for instance, *Arda Wirāz Namāg* 38.3, 49.1, *Bahman Yašt* 4.28, *Dēnkard* 3.183, 5.12.2, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 18e.6–8, 46.27

35 The etymology is from Avestan *nasu-*, cognate to Greek νέκυς, Latin *necare*, etc.

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law.[36] One thought the twig polluted by *nasā*, while his colleague considered it a case of *hixr*: the question really was a conundrum, and intentionally so.[37] Most significant for us, however, is the fact that all parties understood not only excrement, but also vomit and urine as forms of *hixr*.

Given that these substances are fluid in nature (note that the excrement in question was specifically avian ordure), plus the etymology from Avestan *haēk-*, Darmesteter and Bartholomae concluded that those things classified as *hixr* were liquid excretions, and that the contrast of *hixr* to *nasā* was built on the opposition of moist to dry. Elegant though it may be, the theory has two flaws. First, *nasā* denotes the fleshy substance of bodies from the moment of death to the point when such matter has been picked clean, leaving only dry bones (which ≠ *nasā*).[38] As such, *nasā* always has some measure of moisture present and is not defined by the quality of dryness. Second, there are types of *hixr* that go unmentioned in the *Vīdaēuudāt* passage that are explicitly

36 Abarag and Mēdōmāh were priests (*dastwar*s) of the 6th century CE, whose works were frequently cited – occasionally in opposition to each other – by the *Pahlavi Vendidad*, *Nērangistān*, *Epistles of Manušcihr*, and *Šāyast nē Šāyast*. The two major legal schools of Sassanian Zoroastrianism took their names from these men and *Greater Bundahišn* 35.53–54 treats Mēdōmāh as Zarathuštra's father's brother's son, telling that he received the Good Religion direct from his cousin. Apparently, Abarag and Mēdōmāh both wrote authoritative commentaries on the Avesta, neither of which has survived. See further Carlo G. Cereti, *La Letteratura Pahlavi* (Milan: Mimesis, 2001), pp. 145–46 and 208, Maria Macuch, *Rechtskasuistik und Gerichtspraxis zu Beginn des siebenten Jahrhunderts in Iran. Die Rechtssammlung des Farroḫmard i Wahrāmān* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1993), pp. 13–14.

37 *Pahlavi Vendidad* 5.1:

> A bird flies up from a high mountain to the deep river bed, on a tree. It gnaws the body of that dead man. That bird then flies from the deep river bed to the high mountain. It flies onto a tree, which is hard (like an almond tree) or soft (like a rotten willow). It vomits on that. Abarag called that "bodily filth" (*hixr*); Mēdōmāh called it "corpse-matter" (*nāsa*).
>
> *ān murw ūl wāzēd, az* (*ān ī*) *buland gar,* (*az abar*)*, ō ān ī zofr rōstāg, abar ān wan; ān kirb frāz xwarēd ī ōy rist mardōm; ān murw ūl wāzēd, az ān zofr rōstāg, abar ō* (*ān ī*) *buland gar; abar ān wan wazēd* (*ī*) *saxt, ciyōn wan-ē wādam*), *narm,* (*ciyōn wēd pūdag*)*; abar ān wāmēd. Abarag hixr guft, Mēdōmāh nasā.*

38 *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 16.9:

> Bone, given its hardness, naturally becomes dry when there is no flesh on it and it is no preserver of its own moisture. Then it becomes long-lasting and devoid of fat. In its dryness, it changes from the nature of *nasā* to the nature of *hixr* and is consumed.
>
> *cē ast pad-iš saxtīh ka-š pid tā tarr nē abāg u-š nē bawēd tarr dāštār xwad cihrīgīhā huškīhēd ud a-carbišn ud dagr-pattāyišn bawēd. pad huškīh az nasāyīh be ō hixrīh xwarīhēd.*

Cf. *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 16.11–13.

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defined as dry. Particularly telling is *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 55.3.

> When some *hixr* falls from one's hand, foot, or limb, if there is no moisture on it, then it is *hixr*; if not, it is *nasā*.[39]

So flesh and fat are *nasā*, while dry bones, flaked-off skin, hair and nails are classified as *hixr*, falsifying any attempt to define *hixr* with reference to moisture. Influenced by passages like that just cited, B.T. Anklesaria tried the opposite tack, translating *hixr* as "dry dead matter,"[40] but that runs into the problem that vomit and urine are included in the category, as are semen and menstrual blood, which show up in lists like the following.

> Concerning contact with two forms of deadly matter. One is *nasā* and the other is *hixr*, like menstruation, semen, blood, urine, and other things that come from people, dogs, and other animate creatures, which are pollution and portions of flesh that die while the rest of the body is living.[41]

5

"Portions of flesh that die while the rest of the body is living" – here we come closest to a viable definition of *hixr*, which was a category not limited to any particular substance, but capacious enough to encompass excrement, vomit, flaky skin, menstrual blood, hair clippings, pus, mucus and others.[42] What these have in common is also what differentiates them collectively from *nasā* (= dead matter from dead bodies). *Hixr*, in contrast, consists of the dead

39 *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* 55.3: *hixr-ē az dast ud pāy ayāb az handām be ôftēd ka-š nām-ē padiš abar nē āyēd hixr ud ka nē nasā.*

40 Thus B.T. Anklesaria, *Pahlavi Rivāyat of Āturfarnbag and Farnbag-Srōš*, op cit.,2:69, 2:93, 2:99, 2:102, and 1:138, ibid., *Pahlavi Vendidad* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1949), pp. 48, 93, 95, 105, 120, et passim.

41 *Dēnkard* 5.12.2: *ud abar pahikaftagīh ī harw dō ēwēnag murdag ēk nasā ud ēk abārīg hixr ciyōn daštān ud šusar ud xōn ud mēšag ud xayūg ud abārīg ī az mardōm ud sag ud abārīg gyānwar ī rēman ud pid <ī> andar zīndagīh bahrīhā mirēd.* Sometimes, menstrual blood (*daštān*) is treated as a "more serious" (*garāytar*) form of *hixr* (*Dēnkard* 5.24.19b implicitly *Dēnkard* 5.19.16), sometimes as a category of pollution unto itself (*Zād Spram* 27.4, where *nasā, daštān,* and *hixr* are different subcategories of "destruction" [*wināhišn*]).

42 For reasonably good discussions of *hixr*, see Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Vol. 1: The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 306, Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), pp. 78–88.

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substances that living bodies reject and expel. Such matter is polluted and dangerous, to be sure, but less so than *nasā*, for in the very moment of defecating, vomiting, or bleeding, e.g., life defends itself against such dangerous stuff and the body remains vital. To put it differently, *nasā* involves the total and absolute negation of life, while the negation associated with *hixr* is partial: dangerous, but not catastrophic. As a concrete measure of their difference, the *Dēnkard* specifies that fire must be kept thirty paces from *nasā* to preserve its purity; for *hixr*, three paces suffice.[43] One might then define *nasā* as "corpse-matter" and *hixr* as "bodily refuse" – not just bodily filth or matter out of place (in Mary Douglas's famous formulation),[44] but, more precisely, those substances that were once part of a living organism, but threatened the well-being of the organism, which consequently sloughed them off and continued to live.

If this is correct, we can return to the *Rivāyat of Farnbag-Srōš* with increased understanding of what is at issue when the high priest advised Zoroastrians not to purchase foods prepared by those of other religions. Zoroastrians often call their own faith "the Good Religion" (*wēh dēn*), as it provides the requisite means – doctrinal, ethical, and ritual – for frail human subjects to defend themselves against the forces of death and entropy in a world characterized by mixture.[45] Lacking such resources, non-Zoroastrians constantly fail to take the necessary precautions. Inevitably (*awizīrišnīh*), they let their bodily refuse contaminate the foods they prepare and, indeed, everything they touch.

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43 *Dēnkard* 5.19.16. Similarly, when clothing is soiled by *hixr,* one can cut off the affected portion and salvage the rest of the garment. *Nasā*-soiled clothing requires more strenuous treatment. See *Rivāyat ī Hēmīt ī Ašawahištān* 16.6–8.

44 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

45 *Dēnkard* 3.183:

> All of what is conveyed by exposition of the Good Religion is like a remedy, servant, and physician: this is the Mazdā-worshipping religion. And it is revealed that when a person carries *nasā*, *hixr*, and pollution away from the earth, this is a prophylaxis to protect two-thirds of the creatures from sickness … Breath, fire, and the essential foundation of the human body, these are fighters for a remedy and to protect them is the teaching of the Good Religion. To carry off their pollution and defilement, to protect them from illness, to carry off their pollution and stench, these are the healing and soundness of men and cattle.
>
> *bār ud hamāg-iz be barēnd az nigēz ī weh-dēn hēd ēd owōn cār bandag ud bizešk dēn māzdēsn ēn ī u-š paydāg kū ka mardōm nasā ud hixr ud rēmanīh az* $^{+}$*ābest ī zamīg be barēd wizārīg pahrēxtan dō srišwadag xīndagīh az dām ānābihist-ē … wād ātaxš abar zamīg ud mardōm tan bun mād ī nibardār hēnd pad cār ī u-šān pahrēxtan ī weh-dēn handarz. u-šān abar burdan ī rēmanīh ud ālūd ī padiš wēmārīh udpahrēxtan u-š be burdan ī rēmanīh ud gand bēšāzišnīh ud drustīh ī mardōm gāwān hilēnd.*

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In the face of this, Farnbag-Srōš urges caution. Beyond his immediate proscription, however, lies a whole system of thought and a polemic subtext. For he implicitly formulates a set of homologic relations that subtly suggest that the relation of Zoroastrianism to all other religions is like that of life-sustaining nourishment to polluting bodily refuse. This is not just a contrast between the body's proper input and output, but a crucially important battlefield for the ongoing struggle of good against evil, life against death, Ohrmazd against Ahriman, and – in the last analysis – "us" against "them" (Table 14.2).

TABLE 14.2 Homologic relations implied by Farbag-Srōš's opinion on whether Zoroastrians can buy prepared foods from their non-Zoroastrian neighbors (*Rivāyat of Farnbag-Srōš* 25)

	Ohrmazdian	**Ahrimanian**
Nature and effect	Sustains life and well-being	Assaults life and all that is good
Material substances relevant to the body	Food and the living bodily tissues it sustains and renews	Dead and poisonous substances that have entered the body and must be expelled from it (*hixr*)
Spiritual systems of guidance	The "Good Religion" (*hu-dēn, weh dēn*) that teaches how to avoid the dangers of pollution	All other religions (*jud-dēn, jud-kēš*) that are insufficiently attentive to issues of purity, making it inevitable that food will be contaminated with bodily refuse (*hixr*)

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PART 4

Iranian Materials in Comparative Perspective

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CHAPTER 15

The Indo-European Myth of Creation

Myths of origins have always held a certain fascination for the historian of religions, and for many scholars the creation myth has become the chief mode of entry into a foreign culture.[1] The method is a tried and proven one, and any number of rich studies have come as a result of careful investigation of creation accounts.[2] Certainly there is ample reason why this should be so, for the cosmogonic myth is the myth that establishes the order of the world and thus has important social, material, and economic ramifications, as well as deep religious significance. It is not only the favorite myth of myth studiers, but of myth tellers as well, and is accorded special prestige and respect by those who live the myth.[3]

Given this and given the recent rise of interest in the study of Indo-European (I-E) religion, it is surprising to note that the problem of the Indo-European myth of origin has not received more attention in recent years. Two articles have appeared of late, but neither contains any new insights and for the most part run along well-worn lines of argument.[4] In truth, study has not advanced much since 1923, when two contrasting positions were first articulated. The first is that of Albrecht Götze, who investigated Indian, Iranian, and Greek texts containing the idea of the correspondences between the world and the human body.[5] As a result of the similarities he observed and the transformations that

1 This chapter was originally published in *History of Religions* 15 (1975): 121–45.

2 The most important theoretical works on the cosmogonic myth are Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959) and "Cosmogonic Myth and Sacred History," in *The Quest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), ppp. 72–87, Raffaele Pettazzoni, "Myths of Beginnings and Creation Myths," in *Essays on the History of Religions*, trans. H.J. Rose (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), pp. 24–36, and Charles H. Long, *Alpha: The Myths of Creation* (New York: George Braziller, 1963). For excellent examples of the use of the cosmogonic myth, see Alfonso Ortiz, *The Tewa World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) and Hans Schärer, *Ngaju Religion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963).

3 See Eliade, "The Myth of the Noble Savage or, the Prestige of the Beginning," in *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 39–58 and Pettazzoni, "The Truth of Myth," in *Essays on the History of Religions*, op cit., pp. 11–23.

4 Hoang-son Hoang-šy-Quy, "Le mythe indien de l'homme cosmique dans son contexte culturel et dans son évolution," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 175 (1969): 133–54, Giorgio Locchi, "Le mythe cosmogonique indo-européen: reconstruction et réalité," *Nouvelle école* 19 (July–August 1972): 87–95.

5 Albrecht Götze, "Persische Weisheit in griechischem Gewande: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Mikrokosmos-Idee," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 2 (1923): 60–98 and 167–74.

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seemed to have occurred in the Greek version, Götze argued that the idea was of Indo-Iranian origin and had been transmitted to Greece by Greek physicians present at the Persian court.[6] Essentially, he interpreted the myth as a sophisticated piece of speculation on the topic of Microcosm and Macrocosm, whereby man was understood as the microcosmic image of the world and the world as the macrocosmic projection of man.[7]

Hermann Güntert, however, stressing Germanic and Indo-Iranian texts rather than the Greek texts studied by Götze, came to quite different conclusions.[8] Based on philological correspondences, he argued that these texts contained a common Indo-European mythologem that described the creation of the world from the sacrifice and dismemberment of a primordial androgyne.[9]

Both schools of thought have had their adherents. Götze has been followed by Reitzenstein and Schaeder, Conger, Sander, Olerud, and Bonfante,[10] while Güntert's position has been accepted by Christensen, Frenkian, Börtzler, Schröder, Locchi, and de Vries.[11] Two other lines of interpretation have occasionally been attempted – one that the myth is merely a common "primitive" type,[12] and another that it is of Old Asiatic, pre-Indo-European origin.[13]

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6 Ibid., esp. pp. 79–85.

7 Ibid., p. 79.

8 Hermann Güntert, *Der Arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923), pp. 315–70.

9 Ibid., see esp. p. 335.

10 Richard Reitzenstein and H.H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1926), esp. pp. 3–37 and 205–40, G.P. Conger, "Cosmic Persons and Human Universes in Indian Philosophy," *Journal of the Asiatic Socity of Bengal* 29 (1933): 255–70, Ludwig Sander, *Der erste Mensch als göttliches Wesen* (Bonn: Triepel-Schulze, 1933), Anders Olerud, *L'idée de macrocosmos et de microcosmos dans le Timée de Platon* (Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells, 1951), G. Bonfante, "Microcosmo e macrocosmo nel mito indo-europeo," *Die Sprache* 5 (1959): 1–8.

11 Arthur Christensen, *Le premier homme et le premier roi dans l'histoire légendaire des iraniens*, 2 vols. (Uppsala: Archives d'études orientales, 1918–33), esp. 1:35, Aram Frenkian, "Puruṣa – Gayōmard – Anthropos," *Revue des études indo-européennes* 3 (1943): 118–43, Fr. Börtzler, "Ymir: Ein Beitrag zu den Eddischen Weltschopfungsvorstellungen," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 33 (1936): 230–45, Franz Rolf Schröder, "Germanische Schopfungsmythen," *Germanisch-Romanisch Monatsschrift* 19 (1931): 1–26, 81–99, Locchi, "Le mythe cosmogonique," op cit., Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1957), vol. 2, pp. 259–69.

12 Thus Andrew Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion* (London: Longmans, Green, 1887), vol. 1, pp. 238–54.

13 Thus Wilhelm Koppers, "Pferdeopfer und Pferdekult der Indogermanen," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturkunde und Linguistik* 4 (1936): 320–25, followed by Hoang-šy-Quy, "Le mythe indien," op cit., Stanislaus Schayer, "A Note on the Old Russian Variant of the Purushasūkta,"

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As can be seen from this brief summary, there are three general areas in which disagreement has arisen: the history, the content, and the meaning of the myth. It is our hope that we can help resolve these conflicts and point a way toward a better understanding of the myth itself.

1 The History of the Myth

The basic mythologem of the world's creation from the body of a primordial being can be found in a good many texts within the Indo-European grouping. The most famous, of course, is the Puruṣa-hymn of the Ṛg Veda (RV 10.90) and other versions are found in Iran, Greece, Russia, Germania-Scandinavia, and Rome.[14] Related versions also occur in Chinese and perhaps in Jewish texts,[15] while similar but unrelated accounts are legion, the best known being from Babylon and Ceram.[16]

Given the number of non-I-E myths that are so striking in their resemblances to the I-E patteern, there is a great temptation to argue that this is a common, garden-variety creation myth to which no special I-E significance need by attached.[17] Alternatively, one could see a universal structure of the human

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Archiv Orientálni 7 (1935): 319–23, and A.W. Macdonald, "A propos de Prajāpati," *Journal asiatique* 240 (1953): 323–38.

14 In Iran, the Gayōmard account of the *Greater Bundahišn* and the story of the flight of Yima's xvarənah from *Yašt* 19. In Greece, the texts usually cited are the Περὶ ἑβδομάδων of the Hippocratic corpus, the Orphic Hymn to Zeus (Otto Kern, *Orphicorum Fragmenta* [Berlin: Weidmann, 1922], Fragment 168), and Plato's *Timaeus*. In a different vein, Hesiod's story of Prometheus seems to contain many of the same elements of our myth, but I have been unable to integrate it satisfactorily into my analysis of the mythic framework. Perhaps it is unrelated. In Russia, "The Poem on the Dove King" (on which, see Schayer, "A Note on the Old Russian Variant," op cit.). In Germania-Scandinavia, Ymir texts are found in the *Prose Edda*, the *Vafþruðnismál*, *Grímnismál, Völuspá, and Völuspá en skamma*. In Rome, there are numeorus texts recounting the Rōmulus-Remus story. Livy, Book 1 has been used here.

15 For Chinese, on P'an-ku, see Hoang-šy-Quy, "Le mythe indien," op cit., pp. 136–39. For Jewish, the Adam figure of 11 Enoch may be an inversion of this myth. See also the occurrence of a Gayōmard figure on the walls of the Dura Europus synagogue, Erwin Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), vol. 12, p. 173.

16 From Babylon, the most recent discoveries relating to the fifth tablet of the *Enuma Eliš* now establish Tiamat as a cow whose sacrifice established the heavens, on which see B. Landsberger and J.V. Kinnier Wilson, "The Fifth Tablet of Enuma Eliš," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 20 (1961): 161 and 175. From Ceram, Adolph E. Jensen, *Hainuwele. Volkserzählungen von der Molukkeninsel Ceram* (Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1939).

17 Thus Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, op cit.

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mind behind it,[18] or one could maintain that it is a myth found throughout the world whenever societies reach a certain stage of cultural development (specifically the tuber-cultivating stage of the so-called palaeo-planters).[19] Yet none of these possibilities need detain us here. The fact is that certain linguistic correspondences make it certain that our myth has an Indo-European origin.[20] The fact that there are parallels from the Ancient Near East, Polynesia, or South America is most interesting, but irrelevant to our present study. Our sources contain traces of an I-E myth that happens to resemble myths from other parts of the world, but it is very definitely an I-E myth nonetheless.

The linguistic correspondences between Germanic and Indo-Iranian versions of the myth can also be used to demonstrate that the myth is Proto-Indo-European (P-I-E) in origin and not merely an Indo-Iranian myth that reached Europe by secondary diffusion. Although Götze and his followers were successful in demonstrating that the Greek and perhaps the Russian variants of the myth were dependent on Iranian sources[21] (as was the Jewish version; the Chinese derives from Indian influence),[22] they have never been able to explain the Germanic versions via theories of diffusion.

The main problem, of course, is that of establishing contact between Iran and Scandinavia. Several attempts have been made to do so: Reitzenstein suggested that the Manichaeans carried mythic material to the Northmen and others have suggested the Ostrogoths and Christians as likely intermediaries, but none of their arguments is particularly convincing.[23] Moreover, if they are to be believed, the influence would have come at a relatively late date (no earlier than the third to fourth century CE) and, as we shall see, this is an impossibility. For if we are correct, the Old Norse account preserves certain details

18 Thus Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), vol. 1, pp. 9–11.

19 Thus Adolf E. Jensen, *Myth and Cult among Primitive Peoples* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 83–115.

20 These can be found in the names **Yemo-* and **Manu-*, on which see below.

21 See Götze, "Persische Weisheit," op cit., pp. 79–85 and Olerud, *L'idée de macrocosmos et de microcosmos*, op cit., pp. 219–21 for the former; Schayer, "A Note on the Old Russian Variant," op cit., pp. 322–23 for the latter.

22 David Winston, "The Iranian Component in the Bible, Apocrypha and Qumran," *History of Religions* 5 (1966): 183–216, and Hoang-šy-Quy, "Le mythe indien," op cit., pp. 136–39, respectively.

23 Richard Reitzenstein, "Weltuntergangsvorstellungen," *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift* 24 (1924): 190–204, Axel Olrik, *Ragnarok: Die Sagen vom Weltuntergang*, trans. W. Ramisch (Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1922), pp. 464–77, and E.H. Meyer, *Mythologie der Germanen* (Strassburg: Karl Trübner, 1903), pp. 441 ff.

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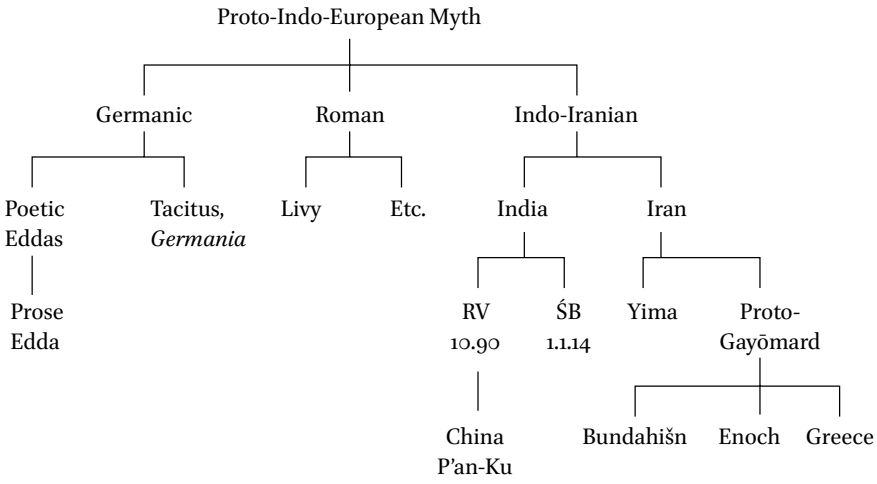

FIGURE 15.1 Genetic and diffusionary relations among variants of the Indo-European myth of creation by sacrifice

from the P-I-E Ur-myth that have been almost completely lost even in the earliest Indic and Iranian texts.[24] The existence of the Roman version, heretofore unrecognized, makes this even more certain.[25]

Our conclusions can be summarized in a cladogram (Figure 15.1) or Venn diagram (Figure 15.2): 1) One class of creation myths can be called myths of creation by sacrifice; 2) The P-I-E myth is such a myth; 3) The chief surviving independent variants are the Germanic, Roman, and Indo-Iranian versions; 4) The Greek, Old Russian, and Jewish versions depend on the Iranian, while the Chinese depends on the Indian. With regard to history, both Götze and Güntert may be freely accepted. The former traces the myth forward into historical times, while the latter traces it back into prehistory. With regard to content and meaning, however, we will have serious disagreements with both these scholars.

24 As we shall see, Norse accounts retain the fact that Ymir (< **Yemo*-) was the victim in the first sacrifice, a fact already lost at the time of composition of RV 10.90 (1200 BCE?) and *Yasna* 32 (1000 BCE?).

25 Credit for recognition of this parallel should go to Jaan Puhvel, who was kind enough to read and comment on an earlier draft of my manuscript. His views on the Roman version of this myth are found in his article, "Remus et Frater," *History of Religions* 15 (1975): 146–57.

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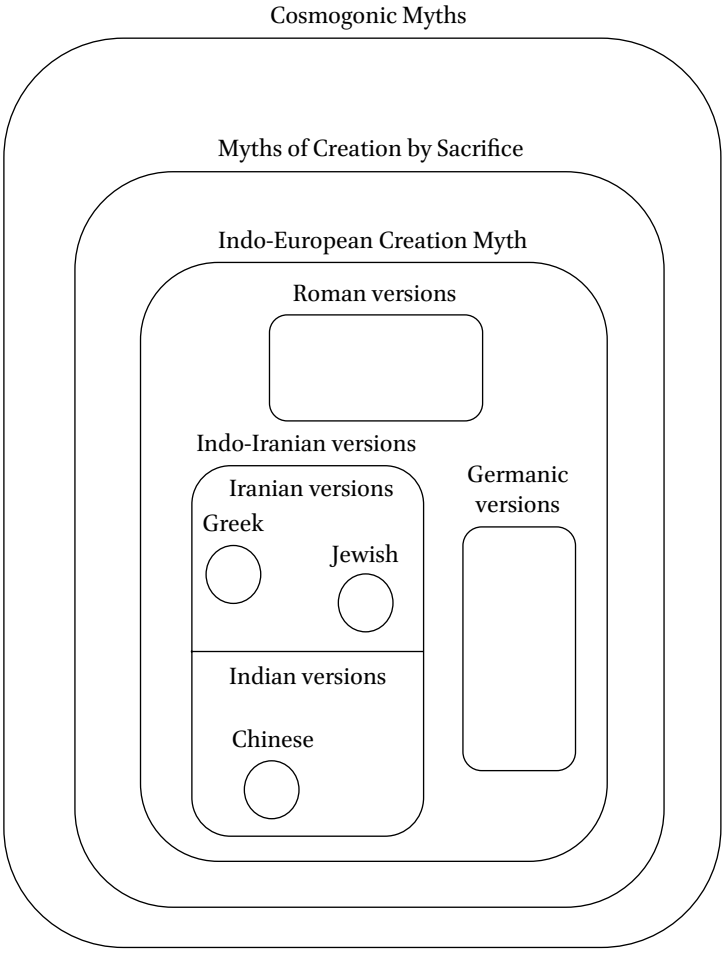

FIGURE 15.2 Thematic, Genetic, and Diffusionary relations among various myths of creation by sacrifice

2 The Content of the Myth

Given our conclusion that the Germanic, Roman, and Indo-Iranian accounts are independent versions of a P-I-E myth, reconstruction of that myth should be possible. Three classic texts furnish a starting point for our investigation.

ṚG VEDA 10.90.6–16

6. When Gods prepared the sacrifice with Puruṣa as their offering,
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn, summer was the wood.
7. They balmed as victim on the grass Puruṣa, born in earliest time.
With him the Deities and all Sādhyas and Ṛṣis sacrificed.

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8. From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up.
He formed the creatures of the air and animals, both wild and tame.
9. From that great general sacrifice Ṛchas and Sāma-hymns were born;
Therefrom were spells and charms produced; the Yajus had its birth from it.
10. From it were horses born, from it all cattle with two rows of teeth:
From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born.
11. When they divided Puruṣa, how many portions did they make?
What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?
12. The Brāhman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya made.
His thighs became the Vaiśya, from his feet the Śudra was produced.
13. The Moon was gendered from his mind and from his eye the sun had birth.
Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath.
14. Forth from his navel came mid-air, the sky was fashioned from his head;
Earth from his feet and from his ear the world-quarters. Thus they formed the worlds.
15. Seven fencing-sticks had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,
When the Gods, offering sacrifice, bound as their victim Puruṣa.
16. Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim; these were the earliest holy ordinances.
The Mighty Ones attained the height of heaven, there where the Sādhyas, Gods of old, are dwelling.[26]

Greater Bundahišn (selections)

4.10 … He [Ahriman, the Evil Spirit] entered in the month of Fravartin and the day of Ohrmazd, at noon; the Sky was as afraid of him as a sheep of a wolf; he then came to the Water, arranged underneath this Earth; he then pierced and entered the middle of this Earth; then he came to the Tree; then to the Ox and Gayōmard; then he came to the Fire; so that, like a fly, he went to all the creations.

4A.l This, too, is said [in the Avesta]: "When the sole-created Ox passed away, it fell to the right hand, and when Gayōmard passed away thereafter, he fell to the left hand."

26 Ralph T.H. Griffith, trans., *Hymns of the Rigveda* (Benares: E.J. Lazarus, 1897), vol. 2, pp. 517 ff.

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13.1 As regards the whereabouts of the five kinds of animals, it says in the Scripture: "When the sole-created Ox passed away, fifty-five species of corn and twelve species of medicinal herbs grew up from there where its pith [semen?] dropped."

13.4 Having carried the semen of the Ox up to the Moon station, they purified it there and created out of it the beneficent animals of many species; first two cattle, male and female, and then a pair of every species appeared in the heart of Iran within the Earth …

13.5 As it says: "On account of the value of the Ox, I produced it twice, once as the Ox, and again as the beneficent animals of many species."

14.2 When illness came to Gayōmard, he fell on his left hand side. 3. There came into manifestation lead out of his head, tin out of his blood, silver out of his marrow, iron out of his feet, copper out of his bones, glass out of his fat, steel out of his arms, and gold out of life's departure, which owing to its value, men now give along with life.

14.5 When Gayōmard emitted his semen while passing away, they filtered the seed by means of the light of the Sun; [The Fire] Neryosang guarded two parts of it, and Spendarmad [the Earth] accepted one part; and it remained within the earth for forty years.

[The text continues, telling how the ten species of humans were ultimately produced from the semen of Gayōmard].[27]

The Beguiling of Gylfi 6–8

Then Gangleri said: "Where was Ymir's home, and what did he live on?

[High One replied:] "As soon as the frost thawed, it became a cow called Auðhumla, and four rivers of milk ran from her teats, and she fed Ymir."

Then Gangleri asked: "What did the cow live on?"

High One answered: "She licked the ice-blocks which were salty, and by the evening of the first day of the block-licking appeared a man's hair, on the second day a man's head, and on the third day the whole man was there. He was called Buri. He was handsome and tall and strong. He had a son called Bor, who married a woman called Bestla, daughter of the giant Bolthorn. They had three sons: the first Oðinn; the second Vili; the third, Ve; and it is my belief that Oðinn, in association with his brothers, is the ruler of heaven and earth. We think that that is his title; it is the name

27 B.T. Anklesaria, trans., *Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Greater Bundahišn* (Bombay: Rahnumae Mazdayasnan Sabha, 1956), pp. 49, 53, 117, 119, and 127, slightly modified.

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given to the man we know to be the greatest and most famous, and you can take it that that is his title."

Then Gangleri asked: "How did they get on together? Was one group more powerful than the other?"

Then High One answered: "Bor's sons killed the giant Ymir, and when he fell, so much blood poured from his wounds that they drowned the whole tribe of frost ogres with it – except for one who escaped with his household; this one is known as Bergelmir …"

Then Gangleri said: "What did the sons of Bor do next, since you believe they are gods?"

High One said: There is a great deal to be told about this. They took Ymir and carried him into the middle of Ginnungagap, and made the world from him: from his blood the sea and lakes, from his flesh the earth, from his bones the mountains; rocks and pebbles they made from his teeth and jaws and those bones that were broken."

Just-as-High said: "From the blood which welled freely from his wounds they fashioned the ocean, when they put together the earth and girdled it, laying the ocean round about it. To cross it would strike most men as impossible."

Third added: "They also took his skull and made the sky from it and set it over the earth with its four sides, and under each corner they put a dwarf …"[28]

The general resemblance among these texts is certainly clear. In all of them a primordial being is killed and dismembered, and from his body the cosmos is fashioned.[29] Yet there are differences in each account (beyond the petty difference that the body-world homologies do not always match up) and it is evident that certain transformations have taken place in each culture and text. The dismemberment is performed by gods in two of the accounts and by a demon in the third. The victim is accompanied by an ox in one text, a cow in another,

28 Jean I. Young, trans., *Snorri Sturluson: The Prose Edda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), pp. 34–35.

29 This is not quite so clear in the Gayōmard text as in the other two, but is true there nonetheless. The basic dismemberment has here been transformed under the influence of Babylonian or Ṣabian astronomical speculation. Thus, the seven metals are homologized to the seven celestial spheres and the disintegration of Gayōmard goes to produce the cosmos. See Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus*, op cit., pp. 226n, 228n, and 229; also, Geo Widengren, "The Death of Gayōmart," in Joseph M. Kitagawa and Charles H. Long, eds., *Myths and Symbols: Studies in Honor of Mircea Eliade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 190.

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and has no companion in the third. The act is treated as a sacrifice once, but as murder twice. Most perplexingly, the names of the victims bear no resemblance to one another. The primordial victim is Ymir in Scandinavia, Gayōmard in Iran, and Puruṣa in India. The question must arise: Are these figures who are structurally so similar really related in any historical way?

The answer is certainly yes, and it is here that the Old Norse version best preserves the P-I-E heritage. Old Norse Ymir, as Güntert first demonstrated, is derived from Proto-Germanic **yumīyaz*, which in turn is derived from P-I-E **yə$_2$m(i)yós* (**Yṃ[mi]yós*, as it might be written in a more modern orthography), a term intimately related to P-I-E **yemo-* "twin."[30] This word corresponds to Middle Irish *emuin*, Latin *geminus*, Avestan *yəma*, all of which mean "twin," Lettish *jumis*, "double fruit," and most significantly to the proper names Avestan *Yima* = Sanskrit *Yama*, which literally signify "twin" as well.[31] Based on this phonological and semantic correspondence, we hypothesize that there was originally a mythic correspondence and that all are derived from a figure in P-I-E myth.

Iranian evidence supports this hypothesis, for behind the figure of Gayōmard we may discern the older figure of Yima.[32] The way in which this transformation took place is somewhat complex. First, it must be recognized that in pre-Zoroastrian Iran, Yima was not merely king of the golden age, but, as Christensen so skillfully demonstrated, was regarded as first king, first mortal, and first to die.[33] This tradition, however, was rejected by Zarathuštra, who soundly condemns Yima the only time he mentions him (*Yasna* 32.8). There is

30 Güntert, *Arische Weltkönig*, op cit., p. 337. This argument has been accepted by most Indo-Europeanists and Germanists. See Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke, 1959), p. 505, Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), p. 678, idem, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, op cit., vol. 2, p. 364, Börtzler, "Ymir," op cit., p. 231, Schröder, "Germanische Schopfungsmythen," op cit., p. 7, E.O.G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North* (New York: Holt, Winston & Rinehart, 1964), p. 278, Otto Höfler, "Abstammungstraditionen," in H. Jankuhn, ed., *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1973), p. 19, Rudolf Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1967), p. 51, Koppers, " Pferdeopfer und Pferdekult," op cit., pp. 320–21, Jaan Puhvel, "Aspects of Equine Functionality," in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 170.

31 Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., p. 505.

32 See Christensen, *Premier homme et premier roi*, op cit., vol. 1, pp. 35–37, Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus*, op cit., pp. 212, 216n, 217n, and 218n, R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), p. 136.

33 Christensen, *Premier homme et premier roi*, Volume 2 of which is devoted entirely to Yima. See esp. pp. 45–46.

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one verse, however, in which Zarathuštra does make an oblique reference to the myth of creation by sacrifice.

> Yasna 30.4
>
> And when these two spirits first met [i.e. the good and evil spirits], they instituted
>
> Life (*gaēm*) and non-life, and how life should be at the end.[34]

Moreover, these two spirits are said to have "appeared in the beginning as two twins (*yəmā*) in a dream."[35]

In these verses, several eminent Iranists have recognized that Zarathustra attempted to deal with an earlier myth of creation that he found objectionable, but which he could not completely ignore.[36] Thus, he philosophized the myth, changing its characters into abstract entities, but retaining the essential mythologem that the first living man died at the creation of the world.

Ironically, however, a re-mythologization of Zarathuštra's version took place in later centuries. In the verse cited above, the Avestan term translated "life" is *gaya-*, which in the Younger Avesta is often combined with the adjective *marətan-*, "mortal"[37] to form the name given the first human being, who was created and died at the beginning of the world – *Gaya marətan*.[38] This name comes into the Pahlavi of our *Bundahišn* text as *Gayōmard*. Thus, the development is

> Middle Persian *Gayōmard* < Younger Avestan *Gaya marətan* < Older Avestan *gaya* < Pre-Zoroastrian *Yima*

These texts, however, are all theological in nature and contain theological transformations of the mythic material. Another Iranian text that preserves heroic traditions serves to strengthen our conclusions.

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34 *Yasna* 30.4: *atcā hyat tā həm mainyū jasaētəm paourvīm dazdē gaēmcā ajyāitimcā yaϑācā aŋhat apəməm aŋhuš.*

35 *Yasna* 30.3: *paouruyē yā yəmā xᵛafnā asrvātəm.*

36 See Sven Hartman, *Gayōmart* (Uppsala: Almquist & Wiksells, 1953), pp. 18–22, Herman Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dargestellt* (Tübingen: J.C. Mohr, 1930), pp. 136–37, Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, op cit., p. 136, Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus*, op cit., p. 211.

37 This term also appears in *Yasna* 30.6, just two verses after the occurrence of *gaya-*, which led Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus*, op cit., p. 213, to argue that Gayōmard was already present prior to Zarathuštra.

38 See *Yašt* 13.87, 13.145, *Yasna* 67.2. *Gaya marətan* appears together with *Gəuš Urvan*, the "Soul of the [Primordial] Ox," in *Visprad* 21.2, *Nyayiš* 1.5, 2.5, *Yasna* 13.7, 26.4–5, and 68.22.

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Yašt 19.30–39

30. We sacrifice to the awful kingly Glory, made by Mazdā,

31. That clave unto the bright Yima, the good shepherd, for a long time; while he ruled over the seven Karšvares of the earth, over the Daēvas and men, the Yatus and the Pairikas, the oppressors, the blind and the deaf;

32. He who took from the Daēvas both riches and welfare, both fatness and flocks, both weal and Glory;

In whose reign both aliments were never failing for feeding creatures, flocks and men were undying, waters and plants were undying;

33. In whose reign there was neither cold wind nor hot wind, neither old age nor death, nor envy made by the Daēvas, in the times before his life, before he began to have delight in words of falsehood and untruth.

34. But when he began to find delight in words of falsehood and untruth, the Glory was seen to flee away from him in the shape of a bird. When his Glory had disappeared, then the great Yima Xšaēta, the good shepherd, trembled and was in sorrow before his foes, he was confounded, and laid him down on the ground.

35. The first time when the Glory departed from the bright Yima, the Glory went from Yima, the son of Vivanghant in the shape of a Varaghna bird.

Then Mithra seized that Glory, Mithra, the lord of wide pastures, whose ear is quick to hear, who has a thousand senses. We sacrifice unto Mithra, the lord of all countries, whom Ahura Mazdā has created the most glorious of all gods in the heavens.

36. The second time when the Glory departed from the bright Yima, the Glory went from Yima, the son of Vivanghant, in the shape of a Varaghna bird.

Then Thraētaona seized that Glory, he the heir of the valiant Athwya clan, who was the most victorious of all victorious men next to Zarathuštra;

37. Who smote Aži Dahāka, the three-mouthed, the three-headed, the six-eyed, who had a thousand senses, that most powerful, fiendish *Druǰ*, that demon baleful to the world, the strongest *Druǰ* that Angra Mainyu created against the material world, to destroy the world of the good principle.

38. The third time when the Glory departed from the bright Yima, that Glory went from Yima, the son of Vivanghant, in the shape of a Varaghna bird.

Then the manly-hearted Kərəsāspa seized that Glory; he was the sturdiest of the men of strength, next to Zarathuštra, for his Manly Courage.

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> 39. For Manly Courage clave unto him. We worship Manly Courage, firm of foot, unsleeping, quick to rise, and fully awake, that clave unto Kərəsāspa.[39]

The story here is ostensibly about the flight of Yima's Kingly Glory (*xᵛarənah*). The crux of the matter, though, lies in Iranian and Indo-European notions of kingship. For the Indo-Europeans, the king is the complete man, who contains within his body the essence of all three social classes: Priests, Warriors, and Commoners.[40] In Iran, these essences are seen as combined in the *xᵛarənah*, the glorious nimbus that surrounds a legitimate king.[41] The myth recounted in this text, as Darmesteter first perceived and as Dumézil has since confirmed,[42] tells how Yima fell from the kingship and lost his *xᵛarənah*, which then separated into three functional portions – Mithra receiving that of the priests or sovereigns, Thraētaona receiving that of the warriors, and Kərəsāspa that of the commoners.[43] It is, in truth, a myth of the dismemberment of Yima and the creation of the social order from him, just as RV 10.90 (esp. verses 11–12) is a myth of the dismemberment of Puruṣa and the creation of the social order from his body.[44] The original mythologem has been transformed along royal lines and an ethical element – the sin of Yima – has been added, but the essential concept is still the same. It is also no accident that the saga of Yima ends

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39 James Darmesteter, trans., *The Zend Avesta* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1887), Vol. 2, pp. 292 ff.

40 See Émile Benveniste, "Traditions indo-iraniennes sur les classes sociales," *Journal asiatique* 230 (1938): 534–35, Georges Dumézil, "Le rex et les flamines maiores," in Raffaele Pettazzoni, ed., *La regalità sacra* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), pp. 408 and 412, and K.A.H. Hidding, "The High God and the King as Symbols of Totality," in ibid., p. 57.

41 On this side of *xᵛarənah*, see John Greppin, "*Xᵛarənah* as a Transfunctional Figure," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1 (1973): 232–42.

42 James Darmesteter, *Le Zend Avesta* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1960), vol. 2, p. 625, Georges Dumézil, *The Destiny of a King*, trans. Alf Hiltebeitel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 38–42. I am inclined to differ with Dumézil and Darmesteter on a detail of interpretation and feel that Thraētaona is properly the warrior figure in the original version of the list. Kərəsāspa, a rival warrior figure (see Stig Wikander, *Vayu* [Uppsala: A.B. Lundquist, 1941], pp. 162–77), seems to have entered for reasons of syncretism, replacing a figure who must originally have belonged to the third function.

43 I prefer "Commoners" to any more specific term in describing the members of Dumézil's "Third Function." It seems to be something of a catch-all class, and not nearly so well defined as it sometimes appears.

44 This motif also appears in the Old Russian version, which is thought to derive from Iran. See Schayer, "A Note on the Old Russian Variant of the Purushasūkta," op cit., pp. 320–21.

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(*Yašt* 13.46) with the actual physical dismemberment of Yima by his brother, Spityura,[45] a point to which we shall return.

In India too, it seems that the figure of Yama lies behind the Puruṣa of the Vedic hymn. Most scholars have agreed that Yama is another First Man/First King figure and have also noted that he is the first to die, thus establishing the realm of the dead.[46] Several scholars have been willing to go somewhat further, however, equating his freely chosen death and his abandonment or transcendence (Sanskrit *pra-ric-*) of his body, as recounted in RV 10.13.4, with the sacrifice of Puruṣa in RV 10.90.[47] As Dandekar, who most effectively argued the case, put it, the Puruṣasūkta is merely a more detailed setting of the Yama myth of RV 10.13.4.[48] In light of the comparison to Ymir and Yima, I am inclined to agree. The name Puruṣa literally means "Man" and seems to be a title born of philosophical and theological speculation. Such speculation changed this figure's name again in the Brāhmaṇas, as Puruṣa, "Man," becam Prajāpati, "Lord of Creatures," but the underlying story is still the same.[49] The morphological and structural features convince us that this is the same figure encountered in Iran and Scandinavia – **Yemo*, "Twin" – first king[50] and first sacrificial victim, from whose body the world was made.

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45 In later sources such as the *Shāhnāmeh*, the murder of Yima is attributed to Aži Dahāka (Pahlavi Zohāk) and the figure of Spityura disappears. This is due to the fact that in these texts the story has been assimilated to the "Kingship in Heaven" theme, as C. Scott Littleton, "The Kingship in Heaven Theme," in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, op cit., pp. 83–121 has shown. But this Avestan text, which is much earlier in date, preserves the story of Yima's death at the hands of his own brother (here Spityura, formerly *Manuš) and represents a midway point in the process of mythic transformation, the Kingship in Heaven and Creation by Sacrifice themes being neatly fused. Later, as the Kingship in Heaven theme won out, the anomalous figure of Spityura dropped from the myth entirely.

46 Following Rudolph Roth, "Die Sage von Dschemschid," *Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgendlandischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1850): 417–33. See, inter alia, Alfred Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie* (Breslau: M & H. Marcus, 1929), vol. 2, pp. 355 ff and Hermann Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* (Berlin: Wilhelm Hertz, 1894), p. 276.

47 Güntert, *Arische Weltkönig*, op cit., pp. 321 and 335. More recently, see R.N. Dandekar, "Yama in the Veda," in the *B.C. Law Volume* (Calcutta: Indian Research Institute, 1945), Vol. 1, pp. 194–209.

48 Dandekar, "Yama in the Veda," p. 202.

49 For still further developments of this figure, see Paul Mus, "Où finit Puruṣa?," in *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou* (Paris: Institut de civilisation indienne, 1968), pp. 539–63.

50 The Germanic versions transform **Yemo* into a giant (Ymir) or a god (Tuisco). This stems from the fact that the I-E notions of kingship were strongly altered in the Germanic area, as can be seen from the disappearance of the P-I-E term **rēǵ-* "king" from the Germanic stock. See Werner Winter, "Some Widespread Indo-European Titles," in George Cardona,

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The question now arises: Who played the role of the first sacrificer in this myth? In the texts already considered, the first sacrificer has been Oðinn and his brothers, Ahriman, and the entire assemblage of Vedic gods. Yet there is reason to believe that all of these are late developments whereby an originally human figure was either deified or demonized, depending upon the prevalent attitudes toward sacrificial ritual. In order to recover the original figure, we must consider yet another version of the myth in which the Indian Manu figures prominently.

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.1.4.14–17

14. Manu was in possession of a bull. Into him had entered an Asura-killing, foe-killing voice; and by this snorting and roaring the Asuras and Rakṣas were continually being crushed. Thereupon the Asuras said to one another: "Evil, alas! this bull inflicts upon us! How can we possibly destroy him?" Now Kilāta and Ākuli were the two priests of the Asuras.

15. These two said, "God-fearing, they say, is Manu: let us two then ascertain!" They then went to him and said: "Manu! We will sacrifice for thee!" He said: "Wherewith?" They said: "With this bull!" He said: "So be it!" On his [the bull's] being killed, the voice went from him.

16. It entered into Manāvī, the wife of Manu; and when they heard her speak, the Asuras and Rakṣas were continually being crushed. Thereupon the Asuras said to one another: "Hereby even greater evil is inflicted on us, for the human voice speaks more!" Kilāta and Ākuli then said: "God fearing they say is Manu: let us then ascertain!" They went to him and said: "Manu! We will sacrifice for thee!" He said: "Wherewith?" They said "With this thy wife!" He said: "So be it!" And on her being killed that voice went from her.

17. It entered into the sacrifice itself, into the sacrificial vessels, and thence these two (Asura priests) were unable to expel it. The same Asura-killing, foe-killing voice sounds forth [from the mill-stones when they are beaten with the pestle]. And for whomsoever that knows this, they produce this discordant noise on the present occasion, his enemies are rendered very miserable.[51]

Henry Hoenigswald, et al., *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp. 50–51.

51 Julius Eggeling, trans., *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), Vol. 1, pp. 29–30.

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Certainly this is a late, aetiological text. Yet preserved within the aetiology is a very ancient myth. Several points must be noted. First, the sacrificial victim is here Manāvī, Manu's wife and, from the appearance of her name, his sister as well.[52] Behind her lies the figure of Yama, "the twin," who has been taken here as a female twin of Manu. Second, the human victim is joined by a second victim, a bovine, just as the victims in Iranian and Norse versions were joined by a bovine. This assures us of two important facts: 1) in the P-I-E version, a bovine appeared and 2) this is an independent variant of the P-I-E myth.

For the moment, however, we are concerned with the figure of Manu. Etymologically, his name is derived from P-I-E **manu-*, "man," and corresponds to Proto-Germanic **manwaz* (as in German *Mann*, English *man*, etc.), Old Church Slavonic *mǫžь*, "man," and Avestan **Manuš*, a proper name.[53] Within the Indian accounts, Manu appears as the first sacrificer (RV 10.63.7, 10.70.8, 8.10.2, etc.). He is said to establish Agni as the sacrificial fire (RV 5.21.1, 8.23.13, 10.69.3, etc.) and when men sacrifice, they are said to be acting as Manu did (RV 6.4.1, 1.76.5, 4.34.3, SB 1.5.1.7). Further, his association with sacrifice is so great that those who do not sacrifice are called *amanuṣāḥ*, "non-Manu" (RV 8.70.11, 10.22.8), a term that carries the sense of "inhuman," as well as "unlike Manu."

There is, moreover, a consistent relation of Manu to Yama as First Sacrificer-First King,[54] and this relation is more than a mere typological pairing. Already the *Ṛg Veda* knows them as brothers, both appearing as sons of Vivasvat (RV 9.11.8, 10.58.1, 8.52.1). Later speculation at a time when the myth was much transformed made them half-brothers, sharing a father only[55] and as a result, many have attempted to see them as doublets brought together with an artificial aetiology.[56] But the fact is that both Manu and Yama have correspondences in Germanic versions of the myth, which assures that they both go back to the P-I-E version. Their relation is that of brothers as Puhvel has suggested and it is only the general Vedic avoidance of matronyms that permitted later speculatuion to make half-brothers of them.[57] We would further argue that the significance of Yama's name, "Twin," is found in his relation to Manu. We thus have a frequently encountered mythic theme – the twins at the beginning of

52 As Yama's sister-wife is named Yamī in RV 10.10.

53 Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch,* op cit., p. 700, Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindisches* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1963), Vol. 2, pp. 576–77.

54 Christensen, *Premier homme et premier roi*, op cit., vol. 2, p. 34, Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, op cit., p. 276, Roth, "Die Sage von Dschemschid," op cit., p. 430.

55 See *Bṛhaddevata* 6.162–7.7.

56 Thus Roth, "Die Sage von Dschemschid," p. 430, Christensen, *Premier homme et premier roi*, vol. 2, p. 34, Güntert, *Arische Weltkönig*, op cit., p. 346, Dandekar, "Yama in the Veda," op cit., p. 207.

57 Puhvel, "Aspects of Equine Functionarily," op cit., p. 170.

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time – which is endowed with a typical I-E content: one brother is the first priest, the other the first king.

In Iran, the figure of *Manu is hidden, but discernible nonetheless. We have already noted that in the heroic tradition, Yima is dismembered by his brother, Spityura (see above). We would suggest that this Spityura is but a reflex of Manu and that the heroic story is a transformed version of our myth. But there is other evidence as well.

As perhaps the single most important part of his reform, Zarathuštra condemned the cultus centering around cattle sacrifice that had flourished in Iran prior to his time.[58] As a result, a myth that described the creation of the world out of the primordial sacrifice of a man and an ox was clearly unacceptable. Rather than being completely lost, however, this myth managed to re-emerge in texts composed after Zarathuštra's death, somewhat transformed in accord with the dualistic theology of the times, but recognizable nonetheless.[59] The *Bundahišn* text that we cited above is such a text and there the first sacrifice – the slaying of Gayōmard and his ox – is attributed to Ahriman. In a very sophisticated way, the act of killing is thus condemned, while the beneficial results of that killing are accepted. Thus, the creation is understood in almost ironic terms as an indication that Ahriman's destructiveness will always be turned to good ends by the superior power of Ohrmazd.

Insofar as Ahriman is an original conception of Zarathuštra,[60] some other figure must have played his part in the pre-Zoroastrian version of the myth. If our evidence from India is to be trusted, we would expect an Iranian figure corresp[onding to Sanskrit Manu to take this role. Phonologically, such a figure would be named **Manuš*, yet in all the Iranian texts we possess, no

58 This is the classic position on the relation of Zarathuštra to the earliest cultus as formulated by Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras*, op cit., p. 248 and "War Zarathuštra ein Bauer?," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 58 (1930): 248–65. Recently, some authors, such as Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, op cit., pp. 38–39, Marijan Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), p. 226, and Mary Boyce, "Ātaš-zōhr and Āb-zōhr," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 98 (1966): 110, have claimed that Zarathuštra did not condemn animal sacrifice *per se*, only certain types or aspects of bloody sacrifice. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that Zarathuštra unambiguously condemned cattle sacrifice (see *Yasna* 32 generally and esp. 32.12) and that cattle sacrifice did disappear from the Iranian cultus, being replaced by sheep, which are less valuable in economic terms and have less religious significance. See further Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Miettes iraniennes," in *Hommages à Georges Dumézil* (Brussels: Collection Latomus, 1960), pp. 98–99.

59 Thus Hartmann, *Gayōmart*, op cit., pp. 18–22, Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras*, pp. 136–37, Reitzenstein and Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus*, op cit., p. 211.

60 James Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1877), p. 5.

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*Manuš appears.[61] In both Avestan and Middle Persian sources, however, there is a figure who assures us that such a *Manuš did onc exist. This is Mānūščihr (< Avestan *Manuš.ciθra-*), whose name literally means "seed" or "son of Manuš."[62] Moreover, in the genealogies, Mānūščihr is made an ancestor of Zarathuštra (*Greater Bundahišn* 35.52–53) and it is expliitly stated:

> Greater Bundahišn 35.55
>
> All the Mōpats of Pars [i.e. the high priests of Persia] are traceable to this race of Mānūščihr.[63]

Further, Christensen has demonstrated that the antecedents of Mānūščihr in these genealogies are nothing other than reflexes of *Manuš himself.[64] Thus, it would appear that *Manuš was originally regarded as the First Priest, but as he was too closely identified with a myth rejected by the reforming Zarathuštra, he was written out of the tradition and replaced by three figures: 1) Ahriman, who took his role as first sacrificer, 2) Mānūščihr, who took his role as ancestor of the priestly line, and 3) Zarathuštra, who took his role a priest *par excellence*. These figures all belong to later Iranian development. For our purposes, we have established that a *Manu(s) played these roles in the Indo-Iranian version of the myth and if we can establish a Germanic correspondence, we will be satisfied that he is an Indo-European figure as well.

Does such a correspondence exist? In order to see this, we must consider yet another text, this time from Tacitus.

> *Germania,* chapter 2
>
> In their ancient songs, their only way of remembering or recording the past, they celebrate an earth-born god, Tuisco,[65] and his son Mannus, as the origin of their race, as their founders. To Mannus they assign three sons, from whose names, they say, the coast tribes are called Ingaevones; those of the interior, Herminones; all the rest, Istaevones.[66]

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61 This is not strictly true. Manuš does appear in *Bundahišn* 31.28 and 33.4 in genealogical lists, but West has attributed this to scribal errors.

62 Arthur Christensen, "Reste von Manu-Legenden in der Iranischen Sagenwelt," in *Festschrift Friedrich Carl Andreas* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1916), pp. 63–69.

63 *Greater Bundahišn* 35.55, trans. Anklesaria.

64 Christensen, "Reste von Manu-Legenden," op cit., pp. 64–65.

65 This form alternates with *Tuisto* in the manuscripts, but the difference is insignificant (Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus,* op cit., p. 51). Professor Puhvel has also pointed out to me the alternance in Old English between *twist* and *twisc* (private correspondence, July 10, 1974).

66 *Complete Works of Tacitus*, trans. A.J. Church and W.J. Brodribb (New York: Modern Library, 1942), p. 709.

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Again, we encounter a character whose name derives from P-I-E **manu-* and who is described as the first man. The name is a purely Germanic form, supported by other Germanic evidence and there is no reason to doubt Tacitus when he tells us that the name was recorded in the Germans' ancient songs.[67] What is more, this Mannus is closely related to a figure whose name means "twin" – for that is the proper etymology of Tuisco[68] – and further still, he is responsible for the division of the world into three parts that are susceptible to interpretation along the lines of class and function.[69] They have been historicized, no doubt, but their original nature is still readily apparent beneath the "historical" overlay.

In Rome, similar historicizing of the myth took place, yet our mythic scenario of the sacrifice of one primal twin by the other is discernible nonetheless in the story of Rōmulus and Remus.

> Livy 1.6.3–7.3
>
> The Alban state being thus made over to Numitor, Rōmulus and Remus were seized with the desire to found a city in the region where they had been exposed and brought up. And in fact the population of Albans and Latins was too large; besides there were the shepherds. All together, their numbers might easily lead men to hope that Alba would be small, and Lavinium small, compared with the city which they should build. These considerations were interrupted by the greed of kingly power, and by a shameful quarrel which grew out of it, upon an occasion innocent enough. Since the brothers were twins, and respect for their age could not determine between them, it was agreed that the gods who had those places in their protection should choose by augury who should give the new city its name, who should govern it when built. Rōmulus took the Palatine for his augural quarter, Remus the Aventine
>
> 7. Remus is said to have been the first to receive an augury, from the flight of six vultures. The omen had been already reported when twice that number appeared to Rōmulus. Thereupon each was saluted king by

67 Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, trans. J. Stallybrass (London: George Bell, 1883), Vol. 1, p. 345, Höfler, "Abstammungstraditionen," op cit., p. 19.

68 Güntert, *Arische Weltkönig*, op cit., p. 324, Schröder, "Germanische Schopfungsmythen," op cit., pp. 8–9, Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus*, op cit., p. 51, Höfler, "Abstammungstraditionen," op cit., p. 19.

69 Dumézil, *Destiny of a King*, op cit., pp. 12–13, proposes one possible means of interpretation, while a slightly different (though no less tri-functional) one has been offered by Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus,* op cit., pp. 53–55 and Jan de Vries, "Sur certains glissements fonctionnels de divinités dans la religion germanique," in *Hommages à Georges Dumézil*, op cit., pp. 89–95.

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> his own followers, the one party laying claim to the honour from priority, the other from the number of birds. They then engaged in a battle of words and angry taunts leading to bloodshed, Remus was struck down in the affray. The commoner story is that Remus leaped over the new walls in mockery of his brother, whereupon Rōmulus in great anger slew him, and in menacing wise added these words withal, "So perish whoever else shall leap over my walls!" Thus Rōmulus acquired sole power, and the city, thus founded, was called by its founder's name.[70]

The differences between the two versions of Remus's death really have little to do with our case, as they seem to be related to the polemics of later Roman politics.[71] But in both accounts the essential mythologem is the same: one of the twins is killed in order that the city may be founded. And just as the founding of the city is, in a very real sense, an act of creation[72] (the institution of laws, rituals, and the class structure follows quickly), so the death of Remus – who was the first to be hailed as Rome's first king – can be seen as the sacrifice that established that creation. Rōmulus is a very complex figure in Roman myth, but here he seems to have assumed the role of *Manu, the first sacrificer. His name is a back-formation from the city of Rōma (earlier Ruma)[73] and thus bears no resemblance to **Manu*, but the name *Remus* is directly derived from P-I-E **Yemo*. The initial **y-* has changed to an *r-* under the influence of *Ruma, Rōma*, and *Rōmulus*, but the word is otherwise exactly as we would expect.[74] Given the fact that Remus is explicitly said to be a twin (*geminus*) and the meaning of **Yemo* as "twin," the conclusion is inescapable.

If this were not enough, one other factor supports the inclusion of this variant under the rubric of myths of the first sacrifice: the role of the she-wolf. For according to the Rōmulus-Remus legend (see Livy 1.4.6), the twins were nurtured as infants by a she-wolf who suckled and cared for them. This she-wolf, of course, is a direct correspondence to the cow Auðhumla of the Norse Ymir myth, who gave milk to the giant at the beginning of time. Roman national pride has replaced the passive cow with the ferocious figure of the she-wolf as a means of emphasizing the military strength of Rome, but the Indo-Iranian parallels assure us that the bovine figure is the original one.

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70 B.O. Foster, trans., *Livy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), Vol. 1, p. 25.

71 See the excellent treatment in Michael Grant, *Roman Myths* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 110–13.

72 Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, p. 18.

73 Grant, *Roman Myths*, pp. 99 and 245.

74 The initial syllabic **iem-* has been preserved nowhere in Latin (Puhvel, "Remus et Frater," op cit.). The suffix *-us* is, of course, the normal masculine singular nominative ending.

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Actually, we are led to reconstruct two variants of the myth: one European and one Indo-Iranian, both of which are quite similar and the two are closely related. In both, the world begins with a pair of twins, *Manu ("Man") and *Yemo ("Twin"), *Yemo being characterized as the first king, while *Manu is the first priest. In the course of the myth, *Manu offers *Yemo as the first sacrificial victim. As a result of this sacrifice, the world is created and *Manu fashions the earth and heavens, as well as the three social classes from his brother's body. In the Indo-Iranian version, an ox or bull, a male bovine, is offered along with *Yemo and from the body of this animal, all the other animal and vegetable species are created. In the European version, however, a female bovine, a cow appears, who feeds and cares for the twins prior to the act of creation. Given this reconstruction, we may now properly consider the meaning of the myth. For convenience, the various elements leading to this reconstruction are listed in Table 15.1, while an analysis of the various transformations is given in Table 15.2.

TABLE 15.1 Details in seven variants of the myth contributing to the reconstruction of a Proto-Indo-European original

P-I-E	***Ṛg Veda* 10.90**	***Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.4**	***Greater Bundahišn***	***Yašt 19***	***Gylfaginning* 6–8**	***Germania* 2**	**Livy 1.6–7**
1. First priest **Manu*, "Man"	Gods	Manu	Ahriman	Spityura	Oðinn and Bor's sons	Mannus	Rōmulus
2.First king **Yemo*, "Twin"	Puruṣa	Manāvī	Gayōmard	Yima	Ymir	Tuisco	Remus
3. First bovine		Manu's bull	Gōšūrvan		Auðhumla		She-wolf
4. First sacrifice	Man	Woman and bull	Man and ox	Yima's Xᵛarənah	Man		Man
5. Creation	World Classes Animals Plants		Metals People Animals Plants	Classes	World	Tribes	City

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TABLE 15.2 Modification of mythic characters and themes in the different versions

	Ṛg Veda 10.90	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.1.4	*Greater Bundahišn*	*Yašt 19*	*Gylfaginning* 6–8	*Germania* 2	Livy 1.6–7
Main tendency	Speculative	Aetiological	Dualist	Heroic	Antiquarian	Euhemeristic	Historicizing
				Specific transformations			
Priest	Deified	Rejected as dupe of demons	Demonized	Historicized	Deified	Historicized	Historicized
King	Philosophized	Feminized	Philosophized	Made tragic	Deroyalized	Deified	Historicized
Bovine	Omitted	Portrayed as powerful, heroic	Portrayed as suffering, tragic	Omitted	Portrayed as nutritive only	Omitted	Made martial as wolf
Sacrifice	Embellished, cleared of animal offering	Condemned as demonic	Condemned as demonic	Changed to royal ideology, euhemerized	Animal offering omitted	Omitted	Portrayed as fratricidal murder
Creation	Animal's role subsumed by man	Omitted	Portrayed as ironic	Only creation of classes preserved	Animal's role altered	Historicized	Historicized

3 The Meaning of the Myth

The problem remains, of course: How are we to understand this reconstructed myth? Clearly, neither Güntert's Androgyne theory, nor Götze's Microcosm-Macrocosm theory is a satisfying treatment for the totality of the myth. This is not a piece of philosophical speculation, as Götze would have it, but a myth, and a myth of peculiarly double nature. To use Pettazzoni's terminology, it is both a cosmogonic myth and a myth of beginnings,[75] or as

75 Pettazzoni, "Myths of Beginnings and Creation Myths," op cit.

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Eliade has more recently put it, a myth that deals with events of the first *and* second primordia.[76] The myth treats the origin of the world and also the origin of the most important human institution – sacrifice. In truth, these are not two separate origins, but one. The first sacrifice *is* the origin of the world and each repeated sacrifice serves to re-create it.[77] Sacrifice is the central religious act for all the Indo-European peoples, and it must have been so for their Proto-Indo-European ancestors as well.[78] The reason for this is to be found in this myth, a myth that was reenacted with each sacrifice.

Güntert did recognize much of this. He was able to deal with the myth as myth and in connection to sacrificial ritual.[79] But in his insistence on the androgynous character of the first victim, he lost track of some of the more important elements of the myth. Thus, he was inclined to take the presence of the cow Auðhumla as a late addition to the Norse mythic scenario and refused to deal with it as part of the P-I-E myth.[80] Given the Roman evidence, however, the authenticity of Auðhumla's role is assured, and in my opinion, it is one of the most important elements for interpretation of the myth in its two differing versions.

In order to appreciate this, we must recall the cultural differences between the Indo-Iranian and European branches of the Indo-European family. Of the two, the Europeans seem to have been much more agricultural, given the evidence of vocabulary, while the Indo-Iranians were more pastoral in their orientation.[81]

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76 Eliade, "Cosmogonic Myth and Sacred History," op cit.

77 See Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, op cit., for a general discussion of the repetition of the cosmogonic myth. Also, see Jensen's theory of blood sacrifice as "the festive reformulation of a primeval event," *Myth and Cult*, op cit., pp. 162–90, esp. p. 168. This aspect of sacrifice has been noted with regard to Indo-European peoples by Sylvain Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1898), pp. 11–35, Molé, *Culte, mythe, et cosmologie,* op cit., pp. 86 ff. et passim, James L. Sauvé, "The Divine Victim: Aspects of Human Sacrifice in Viking Scandinavia and Vedic India," in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, op cit., pp. 175–76, and is quite explicitly stated in Hesiod*, Theogony*, lines 556–57, with regard to Prometheus.

78 See E. Mayrhofer-Passler, "Haustieropfer bei dem Indo-iraniern und den anderen indogermanischen Völkern," *Archiv Orientalni* 21 (1953): 182–205, Joseph Vendryes, "Les correspondances de vocabulaire entre l'indo-iranien et l'italo-celtique," *Mémoires de la Société de linguistique de Paris* 20 (1918): 265–85, Eric Hamp, "Religion and law from Iguvium," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1 (1973): 318–23.

79 Güntert, *Arische Weltkönig*, op cit., p. 335.

80 Ibid., pp. 365–70.

81 Cf. the discussions of Peter von Bradke, *Über Methode und Ergebnisse der arischen Alterthumswissenschaft* (Giessen: J. Ricker, 1890), p. 194, Wilhelm Brandenstein, *Die erste indogermanische Wanderung* (Vienna: Gerold, 1936), pp. 26–28, V. Gordon Childe, *The Aryans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 83, R.A. Crossland, "Indo-European Origins," *Past and Present* 12 (1957): 23–24, R.N. Dandekar, "The Antecedents and the Early

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For all the Indo-Europeans, though, cattle were of crucial importance, furnishing a tremendous amount of the food supply and serving as the basic unit of wealth in the economy.[82] But what is perhaps of prime importance is that cattle were seen as an essential element of the social order – society itself being thought of not just as the collectivity of humans, but of humans and cattle, as reflected in the common P-I-E formulaic locutions "men and cattle," "men and animals," "bipeds and quadrupeds" that have been so brilliantly analyzed by Wackernagel and Benveniste.[83]

There is a difference, however, between the way in which an agriculturalist views his cattle and the way in which a pastoralist does so. An agriculturalist tends to treasure his animals for the milk they produce, while for a pastoralist they are more than mere sources of food. The pastoralist derives not just milk and meat from his cattle, but also leather for clothing, bags, and tents, bone for tools, dung for fuel, and even urine for use as a disinfectant.[84] Cattle seem to him to be the source of all good things, incomparable in their productivity. It is this factor that produces the differing versions of the myth: in the European, agricultural version, the cow is present as a nutritive figure on whom the first man is dependent for sustenance, while in the Indo-Iranian, pastoral version, the ox is present as man's equal and is a vital source of all creation.

Beginnings of the Vedic Period," *Proceedings of the Indian History Conference* 10 (1947): 36, A.B. Keith, "The Home of the Indo-Europeans," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 13 (1937): 16–17, James Mallory, "A Short History of the Indo-European Problem," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1 (1973): 56, Otto Schrader, *Prehistoric Antiquities of the Aryan Peoples*, trans. R.B. Jevons (London: Charles Griffin, 1890), pp. 184–85, idem, *Die Indogermanen*, ed. Hans Krahe (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1935), pp. 16 and 29, Louis de la Vallée Poussin, *Indo-européens et Indo-iraniens* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1924), p. 39.

82 Von Bradke, *Über Methode und Ergebnisse*, op cit., p. 163, Brandenstein, *Die erste indogermanische Wanderung*, op cit., p. 38, Childe, *The Aryans*, p. 82, Dandekar, "The Antecedents," p. 36, Giacomo Devoto, *Origini Indoeuropee* (Florence: Sansoni, 1962), p. 262, Marija Gimbutas, "Proto-Indo-European Culture: The Kurgan Culture in the 5th, 4th, and 3rd Millennia B.C.," in *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, op cit., p. 157, Ward Goodenough, "The Evolution of Pastoralism and Indo-European Origins," in *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, op cit., p. 255, Herman Hirt, *Indogermanica*, ed. H. Arntz (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1940), p. 186, Schrader, *Prehistoric Antiquities*, op cit., p. 259, idem, *Die Indogermanen*, pp. 23–24.

83 Jakob Wackernagel, "Indoiranica," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 43 (1910): 295–98, Émile Benveniste, "Sur quelques dvandvas avestiques," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 8 (1935–37): 405–6.

84 For a superb account of the importance of cattle within a herding culture, see E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), idem, "The Sacrificial Role of Cattle among the Nuer," *Africa* 23 (1953): 181–98, and P. Crazzolara, "Die Bedeutung des Rindes bei den Nuer," *Africa* 7 (1934): 300–20.

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Basically, two theses have been advanced to account for the difference in orientation between the European groups and the Indo-Iranians. One holds that the Indo-Iranians were among the first to leave the I-E homeland, migrating before the time at which the remaining groups encountered agriculture.[85] The second, which necessitates locating the homeland in Central Asia or on the Russian steppes, holds that agriculture was introduced to the Europeans upon their entry into Europe, either by peoples already dwelling there who were agricultural, or as a result of the new demands of the European environment, which gave less scope for pastoral wanderings.[86]

It is not my purpose here to adjudicate between these two views, but it should be noted that in either case, the Indo-Iranian culture and economy are taken to be closer to the earliest level of P-I-E than are the European. Both P-I-E and I-I were pastoral, while the agriculture of the Europeans was a more recent innovation. In light of this, I am inclined to take the Indo-Iranian version of the creation myth as closer to the original Indo-European version.[87]

The myth, then, is a pastoralist's myth. In the first sacrifice, a man and an ox (or bull) were sacrificed. This couple, man-and-animal, better yet, Primordial-Man-and-Primordial-Animal, forms a complete unit of society, from which the physical world and the societal world were created, the latter being composed of men in their three characteristic classes and all the species of domesticated animals. As the primordial beings were dismembered, society came into being: from the man, men; from the ox, animals. Thus, the total social world originated in the first sacrifice. In each successive sacrifice, the pattern stated in the myth is repeated, man-and-animal being offered up to produce furtherance of men-and-animals. It is not simply a gift-exchange, though that

85 Brandenstein, *Die erste indogermanische Wanderung*, op cit., p. 26, Keith, "Home of the Indo-Europeans," op cit., pp. 3–4, von Bradke, *Methode und Ergebnisse*, op cit., pp. 217–18. This coincides with the chronology proposed by George L. Trager and Henry Lee Smith, "A Chronology of Indo-Hittite," *Studies in Linguistics* 8 (1950): 61–70.

86 Schrader, *Prehistoric Antiquities*, op cit., pp. 284–87, idem, *Die Indogermanen,*, op cit., pp. 32–33, Dandekar, "The Antecedents," op cit., p. 36. This is consistent with the theory of I-E migrations proposed by Marija Gimbutas, "The Indo-Europeans: Archaeological Problems," *American Anthropologist* 65 (1963): 815–36. Hirt, *Indogermanica*, op cit., p. 208, contended that the Indo-Iranians lost their agricultural terminology when migrating from a European homeland, but this does not account for the prominence of pastoral vocabulary in the European languages and cannot be accepted. Recently, Ward Goodenough, "The Evolution of Pastoralism," op cit., has revived Hirt's theory that mixed agriculture and herding preceded true pastoralism, but his argument is unconvincing.

87 The symmetry of the version from the *Greater Bundahišn* is also so elegant and authentic in feeling as to support this conclusion. While such an argument does not constitute scientific "proof" in any sense, it cannot be overlooked entirely.

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element is present,[88] but on a grander scale it is the offering of the minimal societal unit for the benefit of society at large.

It would appear that this form of sacrifice did actually take place. Archaeological evidence shows frequent human and animal offerings among the Indo-Europeans of the fifth and fourth millennia.[89] With time, however, this practice came to be altered, and human-animal sacrifice gave way to animal sacrifice, which in turn yielded to vegetable or liquid offerings in some locales.[90] Yet traces of this early form can still be discerned in the Germanic areas, as in the sacrifice at Uppsala described by Adam of Bremen,[91] and in the repeated formulae of the *Ṛg Veda* and the Younger Avesta calling for "cattle and sons" as a return for sacrifice[92] – a sacrifice that repeats in ritual the events described in the creation myth.

88 This is in keeping with the exchange-nature that characterized much of the I-E economy, on which see Émile Benveniste, "Don et échange dans le vocabulaire indo-européen," in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 315–26.

89 Gimbutas, "Proto-Indo-European Culture," op cit., pp. 170 and 191. Of course, this evidence does not hold if her theory that the Kurgan culture of South Russia was the I-E homeland proves to be incorrect. For the moment, however, this seems to be the best supported and most widely accepted hypothesis.

90 These developments differ widely for each of the separate I-E groups and any attempt to detail all the various evolutions is beyond the scope of our discussion. For the moment, suffice it to say that cattle sacrifice remained the most important form of animal sacrifice for the Indo-European tribes (see Mayrhofer-Passler, " Haustieropfer," op cit., p. 182, and such texts as the *Iguvine Tables* 1a.1–6 et passim, Hesiod, *Theogony* 545 ff., *Iliad* 2.410–31, *Heimskringla* 1.186–87, *Eyrbyggja Saga* 4 *Ṛg Veda* 2.7.5, 8.43.11, 6.16.47, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.6.3.9, *Yasna* 8.1–2, 32.12, Pliny, *Natural History* 16.249–51. See also the Hittite archaeological remains reported in Stuart Piggott, "Heads and Hoofs," *Antiquity* 36 (1962): 110–18.

91 Francis T. Tschan, ed. and trans., *Adam of Bremen: History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 207–8.

92 RV 1.113.18, 5.20.4, 3.1.23, 3.16.1; *Yasna* 4.5, 24.10, 62.10.

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CHAPTER 16

Treatment of Hair and Fingernails among the Indo Europeans

One of the important lessons that is learned from the study of history of religions is that there is no act so small or insignificant that it can not take on symbolic importance in certain cultures.[1] It is not always an easy task to recognize such symbolically invested action, although the existence of elaborate rules for behavior in a given situation may serve as a valuable clue. And if the identification of such action is sometimes difficult, the interpretation of a given motion, gesture, or ritual is even more delicate.

An interesting example is provided by the extreme care with which hair cuttings and nail parings are treated by numerous peoples throughout the world. This care has often been noted and two major theories have been propounded to account for it. First, Sir James George Frazer argued that the reason these items of bodily refuse were disposed of so carefully was that, having once been attached to their owner, a sympathetic connection persisted between them and him. A witch or sorcerer could then make use of this connection if one's hair or nails fell into their hands and accordingly, one must destroy them or hide them well in order to prevent this possibility.[2] In Frazer's scheme, the magical use of hair or nail parings by a sorcerer belonged to "the contagious branch of sympathetic magic," and care in disposal was simply a piece of precautionary action.[3]

Like most of Frazer's theories, this view has been enormously influential and still finds adherents, but it has also come under sustained attack and fallen into disfavor in many circles. One of the most interesting and powerful attacks has come from Mary Douglas in her work, *Purity and Danger*.[4] There, following the lead of Marcel Mauss, she argues that Frazer created a false dichotomy between magic and religion, that acts assumed by Frazer to be magically motivated – specifically, rules of purity – in fact were religious and rational in nature, and finally that beneath the religious significance, there lay a social

1 This chapter was originally published in *History of Religions* 16 (1977): 351–62.

2 Sir James George Frazer, "Disposal of Cut Hair and Nails," in *The Golden Bough*, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1935), vol. 2, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 267–87.

3 Ibid., pp. 268 and 274 ff.

4 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 22–28.

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significance.[5] Specifically, Douglas argues that the body is a powerful model or image that can represent any bounded system and that most often represents society itself. The limits of the body, then, represent the limits of society, the points at which it encounters opposition and danger, and must thus be treated with appropriate care. She writes,

> … All margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat. The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins. There is no reason to assume any primacy for the individual's attitude to his own bodily and emotional experience, any more than for his cultural and social experience.[6]

Douglas's suggestion is original and fascinating and undoubtedly has great applicability in many instances (as does that of Frazer). But given the data to be considered below, I fear that neither of these theories can account for the way hair and nails are treated by the people with whom I have the greatest familiarity, the Proto-Indo-Europeans. Rather, another theory seems more suitable, that which has been advanced by Mircea Eliade.

To the best of my knowledge, Eliade has not taken up the issue of what various people do with their hair and fingernails; yet his general remarks on the nature of ritual provide us with a framework for considering this specific problem.

> In the particulars of his conscious behavior, the "primitive," the archaic man, acknowledges no act which has not been previously posited and lived by someone else, some other being who was not a man. What he

5 For the social nature of magic, see Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, trans. Robert Brain (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 119–21 and 124–34. See also his important review of the first two volumes of the third edition of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which appeared in *L'Année sociologique* 12 (1913): 76–79, reprinted in Mauss's *Oeuvres. Vol. 1: Les Fonctions sociales du sacré* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1968), pp. 154–57. Note Douglas's acknowledgment of her debt to the authors of the French sociological school in her *Natural Symbols* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), pp. 11–12.

6 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, op cit., p. 121.

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> does has been done before. His life is the ceaseless repetition of gestures initiated by others. This conscious repetition of given paradigmatic gestures reveals an original ontology. The crude product of nature, the object fashioned by the industry of man, acquire their reality, their identity, only to the extent of their participation in a transcendent reality. The gesture acquires meaning, reality, solely to the extent to which it repeats a primordial act.[7]

One of the first places we might look in considering the practices of the Indo-Europeans with regard to hair and nails is the Indian ritual of a child's first tonsure, the Cūḍākarman, described in the *Śaṇkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* 1.28 and elsewhere. This is performed for a Brahman at the age of one or three, for a Kṣatriya at age five, and for a Vaiśya at age seven. The child's hair is untangled and anointed, and a young Kuśa shoot is placed in it, Kuśa being the sacred grass of ceremonial.[8] His hair is then shaved with a copper razor and placed in a mound of bull dung mixed with Kuśa grass that has been prepared to receive the hair. Finally, "to the Northeast, in a place covered with herbs, or in the neighborhood of water, they bury the hairs in the earth."[9]

We must note in this description the constant association of the hair with vegetation, first through the insertion of the Kuśa shoot in the child's hair, then through the placement of the shorn hair on the mound containing more Kuśa grass, and finally through the burial of the hair in the earth "in a place covered with herbs." A similar situation is found among the Romans in the rites associated with the chief priest of Jupiter, the Flamen Dialis, and his wife, the Flaminica. The description of these practices is found in Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 10.15.

> 1. The ceremonies placed upon the Flamen Dialis are many, and the forbearances are also numerous … 11. No one should cut the hair of the Dialis except a free man … 15. The cuttings of the nails and hair of the Dialis are buried in the earth under a fruitful tree … 26. There are almost the same ceremonies for the Flaminica Dialis; 27. and they say that other different

7 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1954), p. 5.

8 See A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (1912; reprint ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), Vol. I, p. 173.

9 *Śankhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra* 1.28.23, trans. Hermann Oldenberg, *The Grihya Sūtras* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886–92), Vol. I, pp. 55–57 (passage citeed at p. 57). Cf. *Khādira Gṛhya Sūtra* 2.4.31 in idem, Vol. I, p. 399, *Gobhila Gṛhya Sūtra*, Vol. II, p. 62, and *Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhya Sūtra*, Vol. II, p. 218.

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> ones are to be observed, 28. for instance, that she is covered with a dyed gown and that in her veil she has the shoot of a fruitful tree.[10]

For the most part, these observances have been treated as "taboos" by scholars who chose to comment upon them,[11] but the text allows considerable doubt on this point. Gellius specifically states that he is discussing the rituals (*caerimoniae*) of the Flamen Dialis, as well as the avoidances (*castus*) he must observe and the question is whether these practices fall under the first category or the second. Recently, Walter Pötscher has shown that much of what had been assumed to be simply taboo or superstition with regard to the Flamen Dialis is really ritual of the most profound significance,[12] and Angelo Brelich has argued in favor of seeing the Dialis as the most archaic and in ways the most important of the Roman priests.[13] That the rules surrounding the treatment of the Dialis's hair and nails are not frivolous "superstitions" can be perceived from the fact that similar rules were imposed on the Vestal Virgins, who were also among the most important and archaic of the Roman priesthoods.[14] Thus, Pliny reports: "Truly, there is a lotus tree in Rome, in the area of Lucina … Now this tree is about 500 years old or older – its age is uncertain – and it is called 'the hairy one' because the hair of the Vestal Virgins is brought to it."[15]

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10 1. *Caerimoniae impositae flamini Diali multae, item castus multiplices … 11. Capillum Dialis, nisi qui liber homo est, non detonset … 15. Unguium Dialis et capilli segmina subter arborem felicem terra operiuntur … 26. Eaedem ferme caerimoniae sunt flaminicae Dialis; 27. alias seorsum aiunt observitare, 28. veluti est quod venenato operitur et quod in rica surculum de arbore felici habet.* On the expression *arbor felix*, here translated "fruitful tree" and associated in Rome with a whole system of classification as to whether trees are fruitful or unfruitful, auspicious or inauspicious, see Jacques Andrée, "*Arbor felix, arbor infelix*," in Marcel Renard and Robert Schilling, eds., *Hommages à Jean Bayet* (Brussels: Collection Latomus, 1964), pp. 35–46.

11 Inter alia, Cyril Bailey, *Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933), pp. 26–29, W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People* (London: Macmillan, 1933), p. 35, Jean Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (Paris: Payot, 1957), pp. 43 and 100.

12 W. Pötscher, "Flamen Dialis," *Mnemosyne* 21 (1968): 215–39. Pötscher's discussion centers on the relations of the Flamen and Flaminica as a model of the *hieros gamos* of heaven and earth.

13 Angelo Brelich, "Appunti sul Flamen Dialis," *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis* 8 (1972): 17–21. See esp. p. 19 and note the fact that the form of the name *Dialis* (rather than *Iovialis*) indicates great antiquity.

14 Ibid., p. 17. Note that only the Vestales and Flamines among Roman priests and priestesses were named after the gods they served.

15 Pliny, *Natural History* 16.235: *Romae vero lotos in Lucinae area … haec nunc D circiter annum habet; antiquior, sed incerta eius aetas, quae capillata dicitur, quoniam Vestalium virginum capillus ad eam defertur*. On the special nature of the lotus tree, see *Natural History* 22.55:

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Again we have the association of hair with vegetation and, in the case of the Flamen Dialis, fingernails as well. The practices of the Flamen and Flaminica also bear other similarities to the Indian Cūḍākarman – a shoot is stuck in the Flaminica's hair, just as a shoot is placed in the hair of the young Indian boy and the hair and nails of the Flamen (presumably also the Flaminica) are buried in the earth, as is the hair of his Indian counterpart. In both the Indian and Roman examples, these practices have been restricted to certain specific situations. The Cūḍākarman, is performed only for the first tonsure and in Rome special care is taken with the hair and nails of only the most important priestly personages. Among the Germans, however, such practices seem to have been more general and they survive in a number of folkloric practices.

Thus, in Oldenburg hair and nails are wrapped in a cloth and fastened under a tree three days before the new moon to cure infertility.[16] Similarly, in Brandenburg, Düsseldorf, Swabia, and elsewhere, hair and nails are placed in a hole bored in a tree or are placed on a branch. This is often done when one suffers from some sort of pain and the pain is said to go with these, moving to anyone who comes close to them.[17] It is difficult to evaluate the meaning and importance of such beliefs. Certainly, the prescription of such practices as means to cure specific ailments is a different form of behavior from those we encountered in India and Rome. Yet we do again perceive the close association of hair and nails with vegetation, something that we see again in an important Avestan text.

The passage in question is *Vīdaēuudāt* 17.1–6, where Zarathuštra asks Ahura Mazdā, the Wise Lord, what is the act for which a certain demon, Aoša (literally "burning," "destruction") punishes people.[18] The Wise Lord replies:

"Those who consider the lotus to be just a tree may actually be refuted on the authority of Homer, for he has called the lotus the most delightful among the plants that grow up beneath the gods …" *Loton qui arborem putant tantum esse vel Homero auctore coargui possunt. Is enim inter herbas subnascentes deorum voluptati loton primam nominavit …*

16 Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Germanische Mythen* (Berlin: Ferdinand Schneider, 1858), p. 630.

17 Adolf Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: Moritz Ruhl, 1925), p. 330.

18 The discussion of the treatment of nails continues in *Vīdaēuudāt* 17.7–11, but this section is obviously a later addition. As we will see, the formula pronounced according to *Vīdaēuudāt* 17.5 presents a truly archaic ideology, while that of 17.7 is based simply upon a foolish pun, as was recognized by James Darmesteter in *Le Zend Avesta* (1892–93; reprint ed., Paris: Maisonneuve, 1960), Vol. II, p. 238, note 9. For a less satisfying treatment of these two formulae, see Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, "Two Iranian Incantations for Burying Hair and Nails," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay* 8 (1905–7): 557–72. Modi was extremely influenced by the ideas of Frazer, although he was forced to acknowledge (pp. 559, 569) that there was no notion of magicians' malevolent use of hair and nails attested in the Avesta.

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> 2. "Precisely that, truthful Zarathuštra, for a corporeal beings who combs and cuts his hair and clips his nails, and then lets them fall into holes (in the earth) or into a furrow. 3. For by these violations of the earth, demons come into being, and from these violations of the earth, vermin come into being, which mortals call 'lice,' which devour grain in granaries and clothes in closets. 4. Now, when in your corporeal being, you must comb and cut your hair and clip your nails, Zarathuštra, hereafter you should bear it ten steps from truthful men, twenty steps from the fire, thirty steps from the water, and fifty steps from the laid out *baresman*. 5. Then you should dig a pit here, a *dišti* deep in hard soil and a *vitasti* deep in soft soil. To that pit you should bear (the cuttings). Then you should pronounce these words, victorious Zarathuštra: 'Now for this one, may the Wise One make the plants grow through Truth.' 6. You should plow three or six or nine furrows for Xšaθra Vairya ['Choice Dominion'], and you should recite the Ahuna Vairya prayer three or six or nine times."[19]

There is much that is fascinating in this text: the need to carry impure matter away from sources of purification (righteous people, fire, water, and the sacrificial strew), the use of furrows to mark off sacred space, and the spontaneous production of vermin (Avestan *xrafstra*s) from hair and nails that are improperly disposed of – a point to which we shall return. But the heart of this passage lies in the sacred formula that is prescribed in verse 5: "Now for this one, may the Wise One make the plants grow through Truth." This statement is a *mąθra* (Sanskrit *mantra*), a sacred formula filled with efficacy and magicoreligious force. In particular, it is a quote from a Gāthic hymn (*Yasna* 48.6c), which has been appropriated, used out of context, and put to a creative new use. In its original context, this line refers to the creation of cattle at the beginning of the world and the demonstrative pronoun *ahyāi* ("for this one") refers to the cow. Thus, Mazdā is said to have created the plants for the well-being of cattle.

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19 *Vīdaēuudāt* 17.2–6: *āaṯ mraoṯ ahurō mazdå. hāu bā ašāum zaraθuštra. yō aētahmai aŋhvō yaṯ astvaiti varəsåsca hąm.rāzayeite varəsåsca pairi.barənti srvaēca upa.θwərəsənti aθa dim upa.taošayeiti unāhva dim raēšayaca. 3. āaṯ āhva vyarəθāhva zəmō daēva hąm.bavainti. āaṯ āhva vyarəθāhva zəmō xrafstra hąm.bavainti yim mašyāka spiš nąma aojaiti. yim mašyāka yaom yavohva nižgaŋhənti vastra vastrāhva. 4. āaṯ yaṯ tūm zaraθuštra aētahmi aŋhvō yaṯ astvaiti varəsåsca hąm.rāzayaŋuha varəsåsca pairi.barənaŋuha srvaēca upa.θwarəsaŋuha. āaṯ tūm pascaēta apa.barōiš dasa.gāim haca nərəbyō ašavabyō vīsata.gāim haca āθraṯ θrisata.gāim haca apaṯ pancāsata.gāim haca barəsman frastairyāṯ. 5. āaṯ aθra mayəm ava.kanōiš dištīm xraožḍisme vītastīm varədusme. paiti dim abarōiš. aθa imą vacō framruyå vārəθrayniš zaraθuštra. aṯ ahyāi ašā mazdå urvarå vaxšaṯ. 6. xšaθrāi vairyāi pairikarəm pairi.kārayōiš tišarō yaṯ vā xšvaš yaṯ vā nava. ahunəmca vairīm frasrāvayōiš tišarō yaṯ vā xšvaš yaṯ vā nava.*

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But here, taken out of context, the pronoun lacks a referent of any sort and can only be assumed to refer back to the speaker himself: "for this one [standing here], i.e. for me."[20] The quotation becomes a spell, a ritual by which the proper disposal of hair and nails leads to the production of vegetation. Again we have the association of hair and nails with the plant world and again we have the instruction to dispose of hair and nails by burying them in the earth.

The association of hair and plants is also supported by some linguistic evidence related to certain Indo-European families of words. Of particular interest are two sets of lexemes fromed from the verbal root **wel-*, "to cover."[21] A number of nouns are formed from this root by the addition of certain suffixes and two are particularly noteworthy, in that they both display a curious dichotomy of meaning. Thus, there existed a Proto-Indo-European **wol-ḱo-*, from which are formed Avestan *varəsa-*, Old Church Slavonic *vlasъ*, and Russian *volos*, all of which mean "hair," but also Sanskrit *valśa-*, "sprout, shoot, twig." Similarly, from P-I-E **wol-to-* are derived Old Irish *folt*, Welsh *gwallt*, Old Church Slavonic *vladъ*, and Old Russian *volodъ*, all meaning "hair," as well as Cornish *gwels*, "grass," Old High German and Anglo-Saxon *wald*, "woods," Old Norse *vǫllr*, "meadow," and Old Prussian *wolti*, "ear of grain."[22] Here, as in the customs discussed above, hair and vegetation are inextricably linked.

The association may be due to any number of morphological similarities. Hair and vegetation both cover surfaces, both are stringy, both continue growing indefinitely as long as their parent organism lives, and both need to be cut repeatedly. Any and all of these factors could have served as the basis for the homology drawn between them. It should be noted that the similarities between hair and vegetation are considerably more numerous and striking than those between nails and vegetation. Given this and given the fact that the etymological evidence supports only the hair-vegetation connection, I am

20 There is one possible objection to this interpretation, which is that the pronoun *ahyāi* is feminine, since in its original context it refers to the cow. However, in that *Vīdaēuudāt* 17 is among the most recent portions of the Avesta, composed at a time when knowledge of the grammatical details of Older Avestan had degenerated, it is doubtful that such a fine point would have been noticed by the author of this passage when he borrowed the Gāthic *mąθra*. See further A.V. Williams Jackson, *An Avesta Grammar* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1892), pp. xxii–xxiii.

21 There are several verbs **wel-* from which these words could be derived, on which see Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), pp. 1136–45. I have chosen his [3]*wel-*, "to cover, press, surround" (p. 1138) as most likely, but derivation from his [8]*wel-*, "to tear, rend, snatch, rob," might also be possible.

22 See Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., pp. 1139–40 and Carl Darling Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 204.

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inclined to believe that nails might not originally have formed an important part of the homology, but were added to the picture later, due to their resemblance to hair in some respects.

More important than any morphological resemblance, however, and more important than any etymological connection, there is another basis for the intimate association of hair and vegetation in the Indo-European mind. This is to be found in the creation myth of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, which, as I have shown elsewhere, told how the world and all the creatures in it were established by the first act of sacrifice.[23] In the primordial offering, the first priest, *Manu ("Man") dismembered the first king, *Yemo ("Twin") and built the material world from his body. Now, certain steps in the process of creation were specified in this myth, whereby the body of the primordial victim became the world. Thus, his skull became the heavens, his eyes the sun and moon, and his blood the seas.[24] Most importantly for the issue at hand, his hair became the plants and trees, as attested in the following texts.

> From Ymir's flesh
> The earth was made,
> And from his blood the sea,
> The mountains from his bones,
> The trees from his hair,
> And from his skull, the heaven.[25]

> Now this is why he [the priest] places the brick of Dūrvā grass: the bodily hairs of Prajāpati which were lying on the ground when he had fallen asunder, they became these plants. Now the vital breaths went out from his middle, and when they had passed away he fell dead.[26]

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23 See above, Chapter Thirteen.

24 Hermann Güntert, *Der arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1923), p. 329 n. listed five homologies as present in the P-I-E creation myth: earth derived from the flesh of the first victim, sea derived from his sweat or blood, mountains from his bones, clouds from his brains, and trees from his hair.

25 *Grímnismál* 40: *Ór Ýmis holdi*
var jǫrð um skǫpuð,
en ór sveita sær,
bjǫrg ór beinum,
baðmr ór hári,
en ór hausi himinn.

26 *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 7.4.2: *yaddeva dūrveṣṭakāmupadadhāti / prajāpatevisrastasya yāni lomāny asīyanta tā oṣadhayo 'bhavannathāsmāt prāṇo madhyata udakrāmantasminnutkrānte 'padyata.*

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The mainstream of the Iranian cosmogonic tradition seems to have lost the idea of the homologies between the body of the primordial victim and the parts of the world, but in one text this notion is attributed to the arch-heretic Mani:

> Again, he states this, that the worldly existence is a bodily formation of rudiments of Ahriman; the bodily formation being a production of Ahriman. And a repetition of that statement is this, that the sky is from the skin, the earth from the flesh, the mountains from the bones, and the trees from the hair of the demon Kunī.[27]

Another trace of this archaic theory is found in an eschatological passage, *Bundahišn* 30.6. Here, as is often the case with eschatology, we see the cosmogony reversed. The context is that Ohrmazd is explaining why bodily resurrection is possible.

> Observe that, when that which was not was then produced [referring to the preceding discussion of the creation], why is it not possible to produce again that which was? For at that time [the end], one will demand the bone from the spirit of earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants, and the life from fire, since they were delivered to them in the original creation.[28]

In the P-I-E view, the world was unformed at the beginning of time and the earth had none of its defining characteristics. These were produced as a result of the first sacrifice, when they came into being from *Yemo's body. Like the other physical features of the world, plant life appeared at that time, being formed from the hair of the primordial victim. But we must note that the creative drama did not establish the world for all time; rather, it was necessary to reestablish it repeatedly and each sacrifice was seen as an act that repeated the cosmogony.[29]

Sacrifice is, of course, a major act and was the most important ritual of the Indo-Europeans. But other acts that seem relatively insignificant by comparison were also understood to be nothing less than repetitions of the cosmogony – or at least, parts thereof. We have seen that this was the case with

27 *Škend Gūmanīg Wizār* 16.8–13, trans. E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1880–97), Vol. 3, pp. 243–44.

28 Trans. E.W. West, *Pahlavi Texts*, op cit., Vol. 1, pp. 122–23.

29 See above, Chapter Thirteen.

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the disposal of hair cuttings and perhaps of nail parings, which were seen to further the life of vegetation in myth and in ritual. When one buries his hair in the ground according to the sacred rules, he repeats the act of creation and is projected back to the time of beginnings, becoming like the first victim, whose body supplied all the raw material for creation.

All this is accomplished when proper care is taken with the disposal of one's hair and nails. But we must also note that when such care is not taken – when disposal is not a ritual and does not repeat the acts of a mythic model – the reverse can be the effect. For if proper disposal serves to create the cosmos, then improper disposal can de-create it or, to put it negatively, can serve to create chaos out of cosmos. This was seen in the Avestan text we considered above, where Ahura Mazdā warned that demons (*daēvas*) and vermin (*xrafstras*) would spring from hair and nails that were let fall to earth without the proper ritual. An Eddic text contains a similar idea.

> Then [at the time of the Ragnarǫk], the Fenris wolf is loosed and the high sea dashes upon the land, for the Midgard serpent turns about with a giant's rage and assails the land. Then it happens that the ship which they call Naglfar is loosed. It is built from the nails of dead men, and therefore it is worthy of a warning: if a man dies with uncut nails, then he increases the material for the ship Naglfar greatly, which gods and men would wish to be slow in being built. And in this wave, Naglfar becomes seagoing and the giant who steers Naglfar is called Hrym.[30]

The specific image of Naglfar, the "Nail-ship,"[31] is undoubtedly specific to the Germanic world, although it does date to a fairly ancient date within that

30 *Gylfaginning* 55: *þá verðr Fenrisúlfr lauss; þá geysist hafit á lǫndin fyrir ví, þat þá snýst Miðgarðsormr í jǫtunmóð, ok sækir upp á landit; þá verðr ok, at Naglfar losnar, skip þat, er svá heitir; þat er gjǫrt af nǫglum dauðra mannæ ok er þat fyrir því varnanar vert, ef maðr deyr með óskornum nǫglum, at sá maðr eykr mikit efni til skipsins Naglfars, er goðin ok menn vildi seint at gjǫrt yrði. Enn í þessum sæfargang flýtr Naglfar. Hrymr heitir jǫtunn, er stýrir Naglfara.*

31 There has been some dispute over this etymology. Thus, Adolf Noreen, *Altisländische und Altnorwegische Grammatik* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1892), p. 143, argued that *nagl-* does not have its normal meaning of "nail" in this compound, but is a variant form of Old Norse *nár*, "corpse," corresponding to Greek νέκυς and Gothic *naus*, all being derived from a Proto-Indo-European **nok-w-i-*. In his view, the story of the nail-ship was a back-formation based on a folk etymology and the original sense was a "ship of the dead." This explanation has been accepted by Jan de Vries, *Altnordische etymologische Wörterbuch* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), p. 404 and *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 2d ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1956), Vol. II, p. 285. The derivation of *naus* from **nok-w-i-*, on which this analysis

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area.[32] But the basic idea on which it is based – that the improper disposal of hair or nails is an act that threatens the well-being of the cosmos – does ascend to the Indo-European period, as can be seen from the comparison with Iran.

We are thus led to conclude that the care with which the Indo-Europeans treated their cut hair and nail trimmings was not due to a desire to protect themselves from the possibility of their being used by a magician, as Frazer would have it. Neither were they protecting the borders of their society in symbolic fashion, although Douglas could argue that such concerns were present at some culturally unconscious level. What is clear, however, is that there was a very real and conscious motive at work. The Proto-Indo-European who buried his hair and perhaps his nails in a place covered with grass, under a fruitful tree, or with a prayer for the growth of vegetation, felt himself to be participating in the cosmogonic drama, recreating the very world with this simple gesture and reestablishing the order on which life depends. A common act was raised to a level at which it assumes great importance and through its association to the creation myth it was invested with meaning.

Such a state of affairs may seem strange to us, but it is a familiar pattern in the thought of archaic and traditional peoples, as Eliade recognized and richly documented. In so doing, he taught us to look for meaning in unfamiliar places, to appreciate the subtleties of myth, and to perceive some of the myriad ways in which people have sought to bring meaning into their lives.

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depends, has been soundly rejected by Sigmund Feist, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der gotischen Sprache* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1909), p. 372 and Albert Morley Sturtevant, "Etymological Comments on Certain Words and Names in the Elder Edda," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 66 (1951): 279–81 also pointed out major difficulties in the Noreen thesis, the chief of which is that whenever Old Norse *nár*, "corpse," appears in a compound, it always appears as *ná-* (thus, e.g. *ná-bjargir*, "the last service to the dead," *ná-gráðugr*, "corpse-greedy," and *ná-grindr*, "the gates of the dead"), never as *nagl-*. Given this, there is no reason to contend that *nagl-* does not have its usual meaning of "nail" or that Naglfar is anything other than the nail-ship, just as Snorri describes it.

32 Snorri's is the only description we have of Naglfar, but the ship is mentioned in the Elder Edda at *Vǫluspá* 50. If the interpretation offered in the preceding note is correct, the idea of the nail-ship must date back to a considerably earlier period, as the *Vǫluspá* contains some of the most ancient Norse materials. The belief in a nail-ship is well attested throughout Scandinavia, as shown by Axel Olrik, *Ragnarok: Die Sagen vom Weltuntergang* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1922), pp. 72–73 and Kaarle Krohn, "Das Schiff Naglfar," *Finnisch-Ugrische Forschungen* 12 (1912): 154–55.

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CHAPTER 17

The Center of the World and the Origins of Life

1

The nature of intellectual relations between Greece and Iran in antiquity and the directionality of whatever influence there may have been is a classic problem, to which numerous scholars have devoted learned and ingenious efforts.[1] At one time, many accepted the idea of an east to west flow in the 6th century BCE, basing that view, inter alia, on the importance of fire in Heraclitus and of homologies between micro- and macrocosm in certain Hippocratic texts.[2] Opinion shifted in the 1940s and 1950s, however, largely as a result of H.W. Bailey's recognition of Aristotelian categories and terminology in Pahlavi sources, and Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin's telling critique of Götze.[3] Presently, most Iranists who engage the issue would acknowledge a west to east current in the Sassanian period,[4] while others are inclined to avoid the question altogether.

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1 This chapter was originally published in *History of Religions* 40 (2001): 311–26.

2 Among the more important works from the first half of this century, note Albrecht Götze, "Persische Weisheit in griechischem Gewande: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Mikrokosmos-Idee," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 2 (1923): 60–98, 167–174, Richard Reitzenstein & H.H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus aus Iran und Griechenland* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1926). Some classicists remain sympathetic to the idea of early Iranian influence on Greece, e.g. Walter Burkert, "Iranisches bei Anaximander," *Rheinisches Museum* 106 (1963): 97–134, M.L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), as do a few Iranists, most notably Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Vol. 2: The Achaemenid Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), pp. 150–163.

3 H.W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1943; reprint ed. 1971), esp. pp. 78–119, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Persische Weisheit in griechischem Gewande?," *Harvard Theological Review* 49 (1956): 115–122. See also the pioneer article of Carlo Nallino, "Tracce di opere greche giunte agli Arabi per trafila pehlevica," in *A Volume of Oriental Studies presented to E.G. Browne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 345–363.

4 See, for example, Shaul Shaked, "*Paymān*: an Iranian idea in contact with Greek thought and Islam," *Studia Iranica* 5 (1987): 217–240, reprinted in *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1995), Mansour Shaki, "Some Basic Tenets of the Eclectic Metaphysics of the *Dēnkart*," *Archiv Orientalnì* 38 (1970): 277–312, and Philippe Gignoux, "La doctrine du macrocosme-microcosme et ses origines gréco-gnostiques," in Petr Vavroushek, ed., *Iranian and Indo-European Studies: Memorial Volume of Otakar Klíma* (Prague: Enigma, 1994), pp. 27–52.

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In a recent article Clarisse Herrenschmidt has reopened this problem in characteristically bold and insightful fashion, taking the theory of embryology found in the *Bundahišn* as her point of departure.[5] There, warmth and moisture are understood as divine (ahuric or Ohrmazdean) properties, characterized by light, and possessed of both spiritual and material existence. Together, these qualities are sufficient and necessary for the sustenance of life. Cold and dryness, in contrast, are seen as dark and demonic (daēvic or Ahrimanian). Moreover, they are the antithetic negation of their ahuric counterparts, darkness being nothing other than the absence of light, cold the absence of heat, and dryness the absence of moisture. As negative entities, they lack material being, and what is more, they introduce death into material existence by depriving live bodies of the heat and moisture they need to survive.

According to the *Bundahišn*, male seed is hot-dry and originates in the brain; female, cold-moist and originates in lower parts of the body. Independently, both seeds are inert, since they each contain a life-negating elemental quality (ovum's cold, sperm's dryness). When they meet in the womb, however, the life-sustaining quality of each seed (sperm's warmth, ovum's moisture) obviates its negative counterpart. Conception results from this union of opposites.[6]

In contrast to this understanding, most Greek authors denied the existence of female seed and, in properly patriarchal fashion, understood women to provide nothing more than the matrix in which children develop from male seed

5 Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Entre Perses et Grecs, I. Démocrite et le mazdéisme. Religion, philosophie, science," *Transeuphratène* 11 (1996): 115–43. For an earlier – and much less successful – attempt to show Iranian influence on Democritus, see Joseph Bidez, *Eos, ou Platon et l'Orient* (Brussels: M. Hayez, 1945), pp. 133–142.

6 The clearest version is *Indian Bundahišn* 16.1–6. Chapter 15 of the Iranian or *Greater Bundahišn* is similar in most respects, but includes two lengthy excurses. See further Chapter 10 above. Other relevant Pahlavi texts include the following.

Dēnkard 3.105: Spiritual light, in the warm-moist power of the living seed, changes from spiritual being only to composite being of material sort. Now, truly, all material things are established in material form out of that same power. And the dark spiritual nature, which is cold and dry, is not able to arrive at material existence, because of its lying nature; that is, it does not arrive at visible materiality.

B MS. (Dresden ed.) 73.2–5: *ud rošn mēnōg pad garm-xwēd nērōg zīndag cihrīh az xām būd mēnōg bawišn ō hambawišn ān gētīg waštan. nišāst ān ī nūn-īz hamāg gētīg gētīg pad gētīhā winirdīh az ham nērōg. ud tār mēnōg gōhr sard hušk druwandīh rāy īm ō īm bawišnīg gētīg madan nē šāyēd ān ī ō paydāg gētīhā mad nē.*

Greater Bundahišn, 26.127 and 27.52: The Ohrmazdean nature is made manifest as warm and moist and light and fragrant … The nature of Ahriman is made manifest as cold and dry and demonic and dark and stinking.

TD^2 MS. (Anklesaria ed.) 181.6–7 and 188.11–12: *ud gōhr ī Ohrmazdīg garm ud xwēd ud rōšn ud hubōy ī sabuk andar fraz paydāg … gōhr ī Ahriman sard ud hušk ud dēwig ud tārīg ud gandag andar fraz paydāg*.

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only. A few took alternate views, however,[7] including the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen*, which includes instructions for prospective parents wishing to determine the sex of their child.

> Males and females can be produced through this method, insofar as practicable. Females, being inclined more toward water, grow from food, drink, and habits that are cold, moist, and gentle; males, being inclined more toward fire, from food and regimen that are dry and hot. If one wishes to beget a female, a regimen inclined toward water should be employed, and if one desires a male, one's habits should be inclined toward fire. Not only the husband should follow this practice, but also the wife. For growth is not from the secretion of the man alone, but also from those of the woman.[8]

As the subsequent discussion makes clear, the seed of the parent does not reflect that person's sex, but is variable, such that it can help produce children of either sex, dependent on its elemental qualities: fiery (i.e. hot-dry) seed yielding boys and watery (cold-moist) seed yielding girls. This is why one needs to modify the diet of both parents in order to achieve the desired results. Most experts date *On Regimen* late in the 5th or early in the 4th century BCE, but there are a few earlier authors who theorized the existence of female seed. Among the most important was Democritus, on whom Herrenschmidt focuses prime attention. Not only did he maintain that both parents contribute seeds that are necessary for reproduction, he also argued that the preponderance of the mother's seed over the father's or vice versa determines the sex of the child and here his views are consistent with Zoroastrian, not Hippocratic

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7 Regarding the exceptions, see G.E.R. Lloyd, "Alternative Theories of the Female Seed," in *Folklore and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 86–94. Regarding classification of women as moist and cold, men as hot and dry, as evidenced in the Hippocratic corpus, Plato, and Aristotle, see Anne Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," in David Halperin, John Winkler, and Froma Zeitlin, eds., *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 135–169, esp. pp. 137–145 and 153–158.

8 *On Regimen* 27: Ἄρρενα μὲν οὖν καὶ θήλεα ἐν τῷδε τῷ τρόπῳ γίνοιτ' ἂν ὡς ἀνωστόν· τὰ δε θήλεα πρὸς ὕδατος μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχρῶν καὶ ὑγρῶν καὶ μαλακῶν αὔξεται καὶ σίτων καὶ ποτῶν καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων· τὰ δὲ ἄρσενα πρὸς πυρός μᾶλλον, ἀπὸ τῶν ξηρῶν καὶ θερμῶν καὶ σιτῶν καὶ διαίτης. εἰ οὖν θῆλυ τεκεῖν βούλοιτο, τῇ πρὸς ὕδατος διαίτῃ χρηστέον· εἰ δὲ ἄρσεν, τῇ πρὸς πυρὸς ἐπιτηδεύσει διακτέον· καὶ οὐ μόνον τὸν ἄνδρα δεῖ τοῦτο διαπρήσεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα. οὐ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς μόνον ἀποκριθὲν αὔξιμόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς γυναικός. Chapter 3 of the Hippocratic *On the Nature of Man* also relates generation to a perfect balance of hot, cold, moist and dry, but makes no mention of female seed.

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embryology.[9] Further, the elemental qualities that Democritus and his colleagues attributed to atoms are strongly reminiscent of those that Hippocratics and Zoroastrians alike attributed to male and female seed, for they amount to a system of opposites in which a salient position is occupied by the pairs hot/cold, light/dark, and fiery/watery (or moist/dry).[10]

Herrenschmidt notes the resemblance between Democritus' views and those of the *Bundahišn*, and recalls the tradition, reported by Diogenes Laertius, that connects the father of atomic theory to the Magi.[11] Ultimately, she urges that serious consideration be given to the possibility of Iranian influence on Democritus, while acknowledging the difficult problems posed by the chronology of our textual evidence. For while Democritus was born c. 460 BCE, the *Bundahišn* took shape only in the 9th century CE, when Zoroastrian priests reluctantly committed their oral traditions to writing when faced with the accelerating Islamicization of Iran. To be sure, no one doubts that the content of this and other Pahlavi texts is much older than their date of redaction, but even so, a gap of thirteen centuries must give us pause.

2

A passage from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* helps fill that gap, while raising other problems.

> The empire was bounded on the East by the Indian Ocean, on the north by the Black Sea, on the west by Cyprus and Egypt, and on the south by

9 The fragments that preserve aspects of Democritus' embryological theories appear as 68A142 and 68A143 in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1989–92).

10 The system in which these elementary qualities are made the basis of atomic classification is attributed to Democritus and Leucippus alike, Diels-Kranz Fragment 67A14. An important portion of Leucippus' cosmogony also focuses on interaction between moist-cold and hot-dry elements: "Some of these [bodies], becoming entangled, make a complex that at first is moist and muddy, but they dry out as they are carried around with the vortex of the whole, and are then set on fire to produce the substance of the stars." τούτων δέ τινα συμπλεκόμενα ποιεῖν σύστημα, τὸ μὲν πρῶτον κάθυγρον καὶ πηλῶδεη, ξηρανθέντα δε καὶ περιφερόμενα σὺν τῇ τοῦ ὅλου δίνη εἶτ' ἐκπυρωθέντα τὴν τῶν ἀστέρων ἀποτελέσαι φύσιν. Diogenes Laertius 9.32 = Diels-Kranz Fragment 67A1.

11 Diogenes Laertius 9.34 (Diels-Kranz Fragment 68A1), citing the authority of Herodotus. On the unreliability of the much later Hellenistic and Byzantine sources, which embroider this tradition and make Democritus a master, not only of Magian, but of numerous esoteric arts, see Jean Salem, *La légende de Démocrite* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1996), pp. 115–139.

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> Nubia. The border areas were uninhabitable, some due to heat, some due to cold, some due to moisture, and some due to dryness. Cyrus made his dwelling in the middle. During the wintertime he passed seven months in Babylon, for that region is warm. In spring, he spent three months in Susa, and at the height of summer, two months in Ecbatana. They say that in this fashion he always enjoyed the warmth and cool of spring.[12]

Here the same set of elemental qualities is correlated with divisions of time and space, as hot, cold, moist, and dry are associated to the cardinal directions and seasons of the year. Based on these homologic associations, the king is then supposed to situate himself at that place which is most beneficial for his health and that of the empire. Two operations permit him to do this: First, he remains within his central provinces (Babylon, Elam, Persia), avoiding all extremes of the compass and climate. Second, within this vital center he shifts his residence in a regular pattern of rotation, designed to offset effects of the seasons. He thus spends two months of summer in Ecbatana, the cold northern palace being best suited for the hottest season; three months of spring in Susa, the dry eastern palace for the moist season; and the remaining seven months in Babylon, which lies to the south and west, and thereby provides heat and moisture to counteract the cold and desiccation of winter. This is not simply a question of seeking pleasant vacation spots, for all that it may have had that effect. Rather, it is a cosmological system designed to establish a balance and harmony between the microcosm of the king's court and the order of the universe at large (Figure 17.1).

Chronologically, the *Cyropaedia* is much closer to Democritus than are the Pahlavi texts. Most probably written in the 360s, it draws on knowledge Xenophon gained while serving as a mercenary in the ill-fated insurrection of Cyrus II (401 BCE). Considerable uncertainty remains, however, about its reliability as a source for Persian ethnography. In some places, it seems to preserve authentic Iranian materials; elsewhere it engages in an orientalist game of mirrors, reproducing standard Greek themes and stereotypes in superficially Persian dress.[13]

---

12 *Cyropaedia* 8.6.21–22: Καὶ ἐκ τούτου τὴν ἀρχὴν ὥριζεν αὐτῷ πρὸς ἕω μὲν ἡ Ἐρυθρὰ θάλαττα, πρὸς ἄρκτον δε ὁ Εὔξεινος πόντος, πρὸς ἑσπέραν δε Κύπρος καὶ Αἴγυπτος, πρὸς μεσημβρίαν δε Αἰθιοπία. τούτων δὲ τὰ πέρατα τὰ μὲν δια θάλπος, τὰ δὲ διὰ ψῦχρος, τὰ δὲ διὰ ὕδωρ, τὰ δὲ δι' ἀνυδρίαν δυσοίκητα. αὐτὸς δ' ἐν μέσῳ τούτων τὴν δίαιταν ποιησάμενος, τὸν μὲν ἀμφὶ τὸν χειμῶνα χρόνον διῆγεν ἐν Βαβυλῶνι ἑπτὰ μῆνας· αὕτη γὰρ ἀλεεινὴ ἡ χώρα· τὸν δὲ ἀμφὶ τὸ ἔαρ τρεῖς μῆνας ἐν Σούσοις· τὴν δὴ ἀκμὴν τοῦ θέρους δύο μῆνας ἐν Ἐκβατάνοις· οὕτω δὴ ποιοῦντ' αὐτὸν λέγουσιν ἐν ἐαρινῳ θάλπει καὶ ψύχει διάγειν ἀεὶ.

13 For differing opinions on the reliability of the *Cyropaedia* as a source for Persian ethnography, see Steven W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian*

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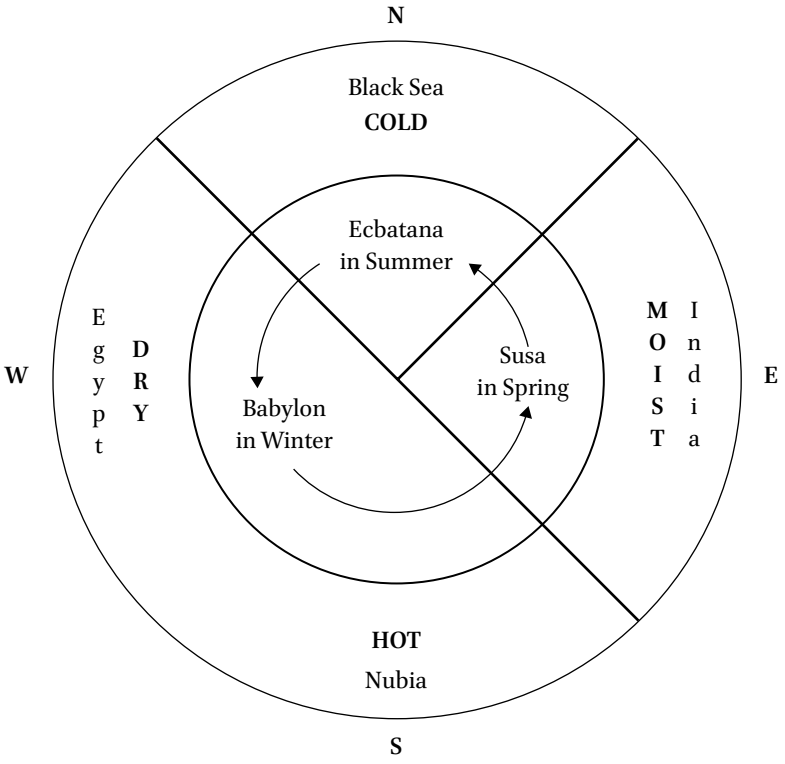

FIGURE 17.1 Cosmological considerations in the rotation of royal residences, as described by Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.6.21–22

Unfortunately, there is little to suggest that Achaemenian kings undertook the rotation Xenophon describes, and the omission of Persepolis also raises problems.[14] On the Greek side of the equation, we must recall that as a

Empire (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1985), James Tatum, *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction: On The Education of Cyrus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), Christopher Tuplin, "Persian Decor in the *Cyropaedia*: Some Observations," *Achaemenid History* 5 (1990): 17–29, and Deborah Gera, *Xenophon's Cyropaedia: Style, Genre, and Literary Technique* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

14 Herodotus also fails to mention Persepolis, although it appears in Ctesias and Arrian. Most scholars now believe that the city was little used, except as a symbolic center where rituals were performed, particularly the new year's celebration, although some set this in spring and some in fall. The former view, as advanced by Gherardo Gnoli, "Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Achéménides," *Acta Iranica* 2 (1974), p. 123, would permit easy integration of Persepolis into the system described by Xenophon. Furthest to the east of the various palaces, it would become the residence for the spring, while Susa, slightly to the south and further to the west of Persepolis, would become the winter residence and Babylon, furthest to the west, would do service for fall. Still,

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student of Socrates, Xenophon would have been familiar with Democritus, Empedocles, and Greek thought on the topic of elements and elemental qualities. When he speaks about hot and cold, dry and moist, it is thus difficult to know whether he got his ideas from Iran, Athens, or Ionia, and if from Iran, whether he reports them fully and accurately or reinterprets them along Greek lines, introducing distortions as he does so. I see no way to resolve these questions in definitive fashion, but can note at least one point where Xenophon's account appears more Greek than Iranian. Thus, where Zoroastrian dualism valorizes two elemental qualities positively (ahurian heat and moisture) and two negatively (daēvic cold and dryness), this is not the case in the *Cyropaedia* passage. Rather, in properly Greek fashion, Xenophon treats all four elements as morally neutral. Problems arise in the system he describes, not as a result of any elements or qualities that are inherently destructive, but from a situation where one element, being present in hybristic excess, disrupts the ideal of moderation (*sōphrosynē*).

3

There are also other materials that have relevance for our inquiry, and which lead us beyond Greece and Iran. One of these occurs in Snorri Sturluson's Edda, an Old Norse text written about 1220 CE. The passage in question details the first step of the world's creation.

> Gangleri said: "How were things arranged before there were families or human folk multiplied?"
>
> High said: "These rivers were called Elivágar. When they came so far from their source, a poisonous yeast accompanying them hardened like the slag that runs out of a fire. Then that became ice, and when the ice stopped and did not run, a vapor over the poison turned to frost and froze into rime, and the rime increased in one layer over another all through Ginnungagap."
>
> Then Equally-High said: "That part of Ginnungagap which looks to the north was filled with the weight and heaviness of ice and rime, and there

such an arrangement is difficult to reconcile with Athenaeus' testimony placing the king at Persepolis in the autumn (*Deipnosophistai* 11.513). See further, M.A. Dandamaev and V.G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 245–256, and Carl Nylander, "Al-Beruni and Persepolis," *Acta Iranica* 1 (1974): 137–150.

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> was a vapor and a smell in it. But the southern part of Ginnungagap lit up in the face of the sparks and embers that flew out of Muspellheim."
>
> Then Third said: "Just as the cold and all grim things come from Niflheim, so that which is near to Muspell was hot and bright. But Ginnungagap was as mild as windless air. And when the rime and the warm breeze met, it melted and dripped, and from these living drops, life quickened with the strength of that which sent the heat. It had the bodily form of a man and he was named Ymir.[15]

This passage, which recounts the creation of life at the dawn of time, is strikingly similar to the *Bundahišn* account of its recreation in every act of conception (Figure 17.2). In the latter, the relevant spatial plane is the human body read vertically, with hot/dry male seed originating in the top part (the head), cold/moist female seed in the bottom (the loins), and the womb figured as the central mediating zone in which the two meet. In Snorri's myth, the space of the cosmos is read horizontally, with Ginnungagap ("Yawning Void") at the center, mediating between the cold/moist rime of the north and the hot/dry wind of the south, both of which elements are equally sterile in isolation. When they meet, however, the two life-sustaining qualities overcome their negative counterparts. Thus, the warmth of the wind obviates the cold of the ice, while the moisture of the latter does similar service to the dryness of the wind, with the result that drops of water appear, from which life begins.[16] A sexual union may

15 *Gylfaginning* 5:

> *Gangleri mælti: "Hversu skipaðiz áðr en ættirnar yrði eða aukaðiz mannfólkit?" Þá mælti Hár: "Ár þær er kallaðar eru Elivágar, þá er þær vóro svá langt komnar frá uppsprettunni at eitrkvika sú er þar fylgði, harðnaði svá sem sindr þat er renn ór eldinum, þá varð þat íss, ok þá er svá íss gaf staðar ok rann eigi, þá héldi yfir þannig úr þat er af stóð eitrinu ok fraus at hrími, ok iók hrímit hvert yfir annat allt í Ginnungagap."*
>
> *Þá mælti Iafnhár: "Ginnungagap, þat er vissi til norðrsættar, fyltiz með þunga ok hǫf<ug>leik íss ok hríms, ok inn í frá úr ok gustr. En hinn syðri hlutr Ginnungagaps léttiz móti gneistum ok síum þeim er flugu ór Muspellsheimi."*
>
> *Þá mælti þriði: "Svá sem kallt stóð af Niflheimi ok allir hlutir grimmir, svá var þat er vissi námunda Muspelli heitt ok lióst. En Ginnungagap var svá hlætt sem lopt vindlaust; ok þá er mættiz hrímin ok blær hitans, svá at bráðnaði ok draup, ok af þeim kvikudropum kviknaði með krapti þess er til sendi hitann ok varð mannz líkanndi, ok var sá nefndr Ymir …*

16 That warm fluids contain the essential properties necessary for life is underscored later in the text, where we are told that Ymir sweated and from his sweat a man and woman were created, who would later produce the human race (*Gylfaginning* 5). Sweat also appears as a reproductive fluid in several Iranian and Greek texts, including *Greater Bundahišn* 4.22 (TD[2] MS. 44.2–5) and Plato, *Phaedrus* 251b–252b.

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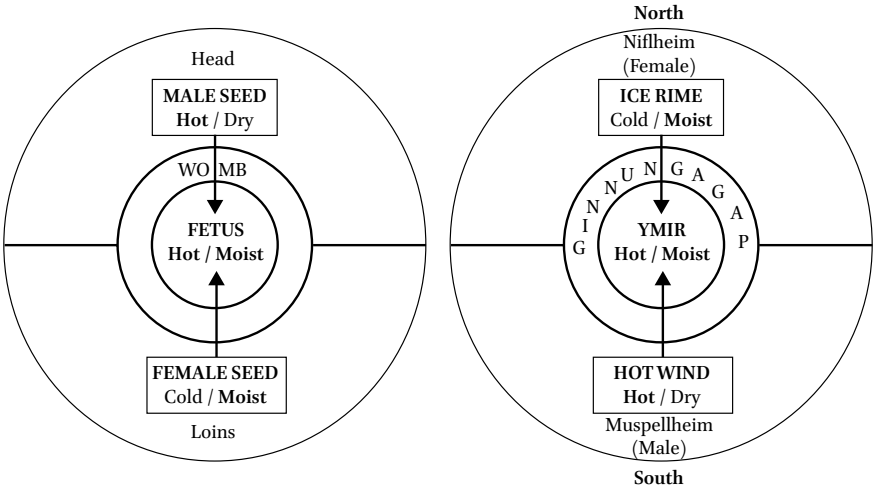

FIGURE 17.2 Structural congruences between the embryology of *Indian Bundahišn* 16.1–6 (left) and anthropogony of *Gylfaginning* 5 (right)

also be implied, since Snorri elsewhere notes that Muspellheim has a male ruler (Surtr) and Niflheim a female (Hel).[17]

Only two pieces of Snorri's myth – the names Elivágar and Ymir – have identifiable sources in the extant literature of pagan Scandinavia,[18] and opinions differ regarding his sources for the rest. Some connect his discussion of cold/moist ice and hot/dry wind to the "prime elements" (*hǫfuðskepnunum*) mentioned in the Prologue to his *Edda*,[19] behind which they see the influence of Greco-Roman speculation, transmitted to Iceland through medieval learned

17 *Gylfaginning* 4 and 34, respectively.

18 Elivágar is mentioned at *Vafþrúðnismál* 30–31 and *Hymiskviða* 5; Ymir, at *Vafþrúðnismál* 21 and *Grímnismál* 40–41.

19 *Prologue* 1, where Snorri describes how pagans were able to arrive at a natural theology, based on their observation of the cosmos.

> They supposed that if [God] rules over the prime elements, then he must also have existed before the heavenly bodies. And they saw that if he ruled the course of the heavenly bodies, then he must control the shining of the sun and the dew of the air and the fruit of the earth, which supports it, and similarly [he must control] the wind of the air and the storm of the sea.
>
> *... ok þess vœntu þeir, ef hann réði fyrir hǫfuðskepnunum, at hann myndi ok fyrr verit hafa en himintunglin, ok þat sá þeir, ef hann rœðr gangi himintunglanna, at hann myni ráða skini sólar ok dǫgg loptsins ok ávexti jarðarinnar, er því fylgir, ok slíkt sama vindinum loptsins ok þar með stormi sævarins.*

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writings.[20] Others – particularly those who maintain the Prologue was written by someone other than Snorri – see the Ginunngagap story as drawing on Germanic and Christian eschatological lore, rather than classical philosophy.[21] Of particular interest, to cite but one example, is Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.430–437, for it was known in medieval Scandinavia and it describes how animal life was restored after Deucalion's flood, thereby combining an embryological with a cosmogonic (more properly, theriogonic) discourse.

> For where there is a mixture of heat and moisture,
> Life is conceived, and from these two everything arises.
> Although there is an aggressive disposition between water and fire, a moist-hot vapor
> Creates all things and this discordant concord is suitable for the bringing forth of young.
> Therefore, when the earth, muddy from the recent flood,
> Was reheated by the warmth of the sun's aetherial rays,
> It gave birth to innumerable species. In part, it restored
> Ancient forms; in part, it created new monsters.[22]

---

20 Margaret Clunies Ross, "Snorri Sturluson's use of the Norse origin-legend of the Sons of Fornjótr in his *Edda*," *Arkiv for Norsk Filologi* 98 (1983): 47–66, esp. p. 52, and Anthony Faulkes, "Pagan Sympathy: Attitudes to Heathendom in the Prologue to *Snorra Edda*," in R.J. Glendinning and H. Bessason, eds., *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 282–314, esp. p. 298, who note the following parallels: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.430–437, Lactantius, *Divine Institutions* 2.10, Florentine Commentary on Martianus Capella (cited in P. Dronke, *Fabula* [Leiden, 1974], pp. 111 and 117), and Chalcidius's commentary on the *Timaeus* 307 and 280.

21 Thus Franz Börtzler, "Ymir: Ein Beitrag zu den eddischen Weltschöpfungsvorstellungen," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 33 (1936): 230–245, and Klaus von See, *Mythos und Theologie im skandinavischen Hochmittelalter* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1988), pp. 52–55, who cite Lactantius, the Neo-Platonic Wilhelm von Conches' writings "On Heat and Cold," and *Gylfaginning* 51. See also the Old High German poem "Muspilli," which describes the apocalyptic catastrophe that begins when Elijah's blood drips on the earth, making mountains burst into flame, while also causing rivers and marshes to dry up (*so daz Eliases pluot in erda kitriufit / so inprinnant die perga … / … aha artruknent / muor uarsuuilhit sih*). Hot and dry, this blood unleashes destruction that ends only with a fiery Judgment Day, when "the broad wet earth is all consumed, and fire and wind sweep it all away" (*denne daz preita uuasal allaz uarprinnit / enti uuir enti luft iz allaz arfurpit*).

22 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.430–437: *quippe ubi temperiem sumpsere umorque calorque,*
concipiunt, et ab his oriuntur cuncta duobus,
cumque sit ignis aquae pugnax, vapor umidus omnes
res creat, et discors concordia fetibus apta est.
ergo ubi diluvio tellus lutulenta recenti
solibus aetheriis altoque recanduit aestu,

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Although one might argue for Iranian influence on Greece or vice versa, there is no such ambiguity regarding relations between classical antiquity and medieval Scandinavia. If we are to explain the similarities among all these various materials via some theory of diffusion, there are therefore only two possibilities. One of these makes Iran the original source of speculation on the role of hot/cold and dry/moist in geography, physiology, and creation, perceiving Iranian influence first on Greece, then on Scandinavia through the mediation of Greece and Rome. A second possibility would make Greece the source, with influence passing eastward to Iran and westward to Rome, thence north to Scandinavia. A particular puzzle for any explanatory account is the fact that the materials furthest separated from each other in space are those that most closely resemble each other in content: the *Bundahišn* embryology and Snorri's anthropogony. Given this, one might be tempted to abandon an explanation by diffusion in favor of a different hypothesis altogether: one that sees these symbolic constructs as part of a common "Indo-European" inheritance.

4

To evaluate the Indo-European hypothesis, it is useful to consider yet another passage from Snorri's *Edda*, in which he treated issues of geography, history, and ethnology in ways that resemble his anthropogony.

> The world was divided into three parts. From south to west and up to the Mediterranean, that part was called Africa. The southern part of that continent is hot, so that it is burned by the sun. A second part, from the west to the north and up to the ocean, that is called Europe or Enea. The northern part of that is so cold that no grass grows and no one can dwell there. From the north around the east, all the way to the south, that is called Asia. In that part of the world is all beauty and ornament and goods produced by the earth: gold and jewels. There also is the middle of the world, and just as the world there is fairer and better in all regards than in other places, so also the people there were most honored in wisdom, power, beauty, and all kinds of knowledge. Near the middle of the world was built the most famous house and dwelling, which is called Troy: We call it Turkey. This place was built much larger than others, and with more skill in many ways, making use of the wealth and means that were

---

edidit innumeras species; partimque figuras
rettulit antiquas, partim nova monstra creavit.

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> there. There were twelve kingdoms and one supreme king, and many peoples and territories were part of each kingdom. In the city there were twelve chiefs. These chiefs were above the other men of the world in all human qualities.[23]

In subsequent chapters, Snorri told how the Trojan chiefs left home and traveled through Europe, ultimately establishing themselves as the kings of England, Saxony, Westphalia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, where their physical beauty and strength set them apart from the natives: so much so that the latter mistook them for gods.[24] His text is an absolute *tour de force*, combining numerous discourses, topoi, allusions, and subtexts. Among these, one can recognize the Virgilian theme of Trojan origins and migration (the historically most significant instance of what Marshall Sahlins calls the theme of "the Stranger-King"),[25] conjoined with a euhemerist explanation of the pagan deities, and a physiological account that is of greatest interest to us, insofar as it correlates the excellence of Trojan bodies with the balance of elemental qualities at the center of the world (Figure 17.3).

---

23 Prologue to *Snorra Edda*, 2–3: *Veroldin var greind í þrjár hálfur, frá suðri í vestr ok inn at Miðjarðsjó; sá hlutr var kallaðr Affriká; enn syðri hlutr þeirar deildar er heitr, svá at þar brennr, af sólu; annarr hlutr frá vestri til norðrs ok inn til hafsins; er sá kallaðr Evrópá eða Énéá; enn nørðri hluti er þar svá kaldr, at eigi vex gras á ok eigi má byggja. Frá norðri ok um austrhálfur alt til suðrs – þat er kallat Ásiá; í þeim hluta veraldar er oll fegrð ok prýði ok eignir jarðar-ávaxtar, gull ok gimsteinar; þar er ok mið veroldin; ok svá sem þar er jǫrðin fegri ok betri ollum kostum en í oðrum stoðum, svá var ok mannfólkit þar mest tignat af ollum giptunum, spekinni ok aflinu, fegrðinni ok allz konar kunnostu. Nær miðri veroldinni var gǫrt þat hús ok herbergi, er ágætast hefir verit, er kallat er Trója, þar sem vér kǫllum árkland. þessi staðr var miklu meiri gǫrr en aðrir ok með meira hagleik á marga lund með kostnaði ok fǫngum, er þar váru til. þar váru xii. konungdómar ok einn yfirkonungr, ok, lágu mǫrg þjóðlǫnd til hvers konungdómsins; þar váru í borginni xii. hǫfðingjar; þessir hǫfðingjar hafa verit um fram aðra menn, þá er verit hafa í veroldu, um alla manndómliga hluti.*

24 Prologue to *Snorra Edda*, 3–6. Cf. *Heimskringla* 1–2 and 5–6.

25 Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985), p. 78: "The ruler as above society is also considered beyond it. As he is beyond it morally, so he is from the beyond, and his advent is a kind of terrible epiphany. It is a remarkably common fact that the great chiefs and kings of political society are not *of* the people they rule. By the local theories of origin they are strangers, just as the draconic feats by which they come to power are foreign to the conduct of 'real people' or true 'sons of the land,' as various Polynesians express it. The stranger-kings, we shall see, are eventually encompassed by the indigenous people, to the extent that their sovereignty is always problematical and their lives are often at risk. But it is just such conditions that motivate a naturalistic theory of domination. By his own nature outside the homebred culture of the society, the king appears within it as a force of nature."

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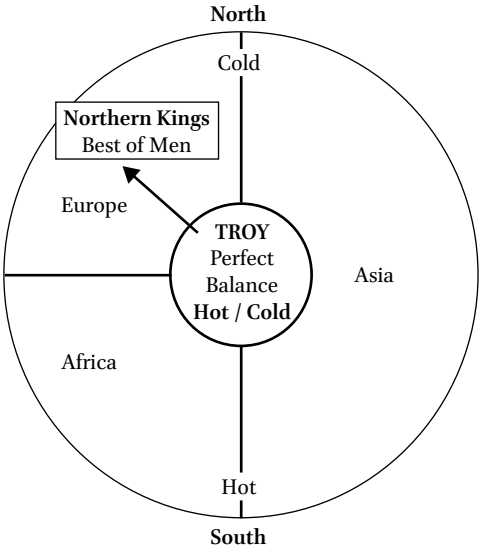

FIGURE 17.3
Snorri's account of prehistoric migrations from Troy to the north (Prologue to *Snorra Edda* 2–6)

In support of this narrative of prehistoric migrations, Snorri offered as evidence several linguistic comparisons, the interpretation of which presupposed a model of language derived from the Bible. Thus, having observed similarities among the various Germanic languages, Snorri wanted to trace these to a common point of origin, which he located in Asia, Troy now doing service for Babel. Toward this end he constituted the Norse gods' names as vestigial indices of their natal land. Thus, "Thor" became Trór, a son of Priam named for Troy; his wife "Sif" was the Sibyl, and the deities collectively known as "Æsir" began life as "Asia-men" (*Asiamanna, er Æsir voro kallaðir*), whose language was "Asia-manic" (*þeira tunga, Asiamanna*).[26]

26 Prologue to *Snorra Edda* 6:

> The Æsir took wives for themselves in that [northern] land, as did some of their sons, and these families became populous. As a result they spread through Saxony, and from thence throughout the northern regions. Their language – "Asia-manic" – thus became the proper language of all the people in these lands. And people think they can discern from the records of their ancestral names that the names belonged to this language, and that the Æsir carried this language here to the north, to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Saxony. And in England there are ancient names of lands and places that one can tell come from a different language.
>
> *þeir Æsir toku ser kvanfáng þar inan landz, en sumir sonum sinum, ok urþu þesar ættir fiolmennar, at umb Saxland ok allt þaðan um norðrhalfor dreifþiz sva, at þeira tunga, Asiamanna, var eigin tunga um all þesi lánd, ok þat þikkiaz menn skynja mega af þvi, at rituð eru langfeðga nafn þeira, at þá nafn hafa fylgt þesi tungu ok þeir Æsir hafa haft tunguna norðr hingat i heim, i Noreg ok i Sviþjoð, i Danmǫrk ok i Saxland, ok i*

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Snorri's theory mixes some good descriptive and historical linguistics with a dubious "reconstruction" of prehistory, complete with homeland, migrations, conquests, and a theory of innate physiological superiority that constitutes the people in question as a veritable *Herrenraße*. With regard to the last of these aspects, it draws on a body of classical literature that treated natural science in the fullest sense, encompassing physics, climatology, anatomy, and ethnology. Most specifically, I have in mind texts like the Hippocratic treatise *On Airs, Waters, and Places*, Vitruvius' *De Architectura*, and a variety of Aristotelian writings that generally began by describing two different sorts of people, whom they organized in a pseudo-dialectic contrast.[27] Typically they characterized denizens of the north as possessing large, pale bodies, dull intellects, and a phlegmatic temperament, all as the direct result of life in a cold-moist climate. In contrast, they attributed small, dark bodies, keen intellects, and timid or bilious temperaments to those of the south, as a consequence of their exposure to the hot and the dry. This done, they proceeded to the point of prime interest: people situated at the earth's center, where hot and cold, moist and dry were ideally balanced, consequently embodied human perfection. Unsurprisingly, Greeks placed that center in Greece, while Romans placed it in Rome.

Snorri can be understood to have drawn on such literature, but to have done so in complex ways, such that he used aspects of the symbolic system to work against its tendentious conclusions. Thus, he initially set the perfect, primordial center in Troy, thereby granting original privilege to Asia, rather than Europe. Second, with his tale of migration, he appropriated that privilege for northern Europe, intervening on behalf of his quarter of the globe, undermining the

---

Englandi eru forn landz heiti eða staða heiti, þá er skilja ma, at af anari tungu eru gefin en þesi.

27 The Hippocratic treatise *On Airs, Waters, and Places* is the earliest text to advance such an analysis, and has been much discussed. See, inter alia Maria Michaela Sassi, *La Scienza dell'Uomo nella Grecia Antica* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1988), pp. 99–104, Claude Calame, "Environnement et nature humaine. Le racisme bien tempéré d'Hippocrate," in *Sciences et racisme* (Lausanne: Payot, 1986), pp. 75–99, Jacques Jouanna, "Les causes de la défaite des Barbares chez Eschyle, Hérodote et Hippocrate," *Ktema* 6 (1981): 3–15, and W. Backhaus, "Der Hellenen-Barbaren-Gegensatz und die hippokratische Schrift *Peri aerôn hydatôn topôn*," *Historia* 25 (1976): 170–85. Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 6.1.1–12 deserves equal attention. On the Aristotlean materials, see Sassi, *La Scienza dell'Uomo*, pp. 104–112. See also James Romm, "Herodotus and Mythic Geography: The Case of the Hyperboreans," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989): 97–113, Gian Franco Gianotti, "Ordine e simmetria nella rappresentazione del mondo. Erodoto e il paradosso del Nilo," *Quaderni di Storia* 27 (1988): 51–92, and David Lateiner, "Polarità. Il principio della differenza complementare," *Quaderni di Storia* 11 (1985): 79–103.

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prestige of the classical civilizations, and challenging the Greco-Roman construction of the north as a frosty barbarian backwater.

Classic ethnography thus influenced Snorri, for all that he reacted against it. Similar motives prompted others in northern Europe to offer their own stories of Trojan migrations, as Geoffrey of Monmouth did on behalf of the Britons, Giraldus Cambrensis on behalf of the Welsh, and the *Grandes Chroniques de France* on behalf of the French. For all that we may now regard them as myths, such tales were taken as authoritative, being the product of the most learned authors and the most skillful research of their time. Moreover, in many ways these were direct antecedents of the theory Sir William Jones would propose at the end of the 18th century, in which he first noted linguistic similarities within a family of "Aryan" or "Indo-European" languages, then used these to imagine an originary homeland in the center of Asia, which he located in Iran, rather than Troy.[28] Subsequent scholarship has seen countless arguments about where to place this homeland, arguments that have regularly been fueled by ethnocentric, nationalist, and racist interests, with some of history's sorriest and most terrible consequences.[29] In light of all this, I seriously doubt that the Indo-European thesis can help us interpret myths about the origins of life, the ideal body, the interaction of the qualities hot/cold and moist/dry, the perfect originary center, and prehistoric migrations therefrom. Rather,

---

28 Sir William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones*, 13 vols. ed. Lord Teigenmouth (London: J. Stockdale and J. Walker, 1807) 3:135 and 3:189–90. The latter text reads as follows.

> Those three races, how variously soever they may at present be dispersed and intermixed, must (if the preceding conclusions be justly drawn) have migrated originally from a central country, to find which is the problem proposed for solution. Suppose it solved; and give any arbitrary name to that centre: let it, if you please, be *Iràn*…. if you consider the seats of all the migrating nations as points in a surrounding figure, you will perceive, that the several rays, diverging from *Iràn*, may be drawn to them without any intersection; but this will not happen, if you assume as a centre *Arabia*, or *Egypt*; *India*, *Tartary*, or *China*: it follows, that *Iràn*, or *Persia* (I contend for *the meaning, not the name*), was the central country, which we sought.

29 On the history of "Indo-European studies," and the role they played in the development of racist thought, see, inter alia, Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), and Klaus von See, *Barbar, Germane, Arier: Die Suche nach der Identität Deutschen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1994). Research on the Indo-European homeland is reviewed in Bernard Sergent, *Les indo-européens: Histoire, langues, mythes* (Paris: Payot, 1995). For a wonderfully amusing critique of the whole enterprise, see Edmund Leach, "Aryan Invasions over Four Millennia," in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, ed., *Culture through Time: Anthropological Approaches* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 227–45.

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insofar as it ventures beyond the level of descriptive linguistics, that thesis regularly succumbs to the risk of recoding these same myths in the idiom of scholarly discourse.[30]

5

There are other materials that make it difficult to explain the commonalities among the Iranian, Greco-Roman, and Germanic materials we have been considering in terms of Indo-European origins, and which also make problems for theories of diffusion. Many examples might be chosen, but let me make note of two only that are drawn from the highlands of New Guinea. First, there are the magico-ritual practices masterfully studied by Aletta Biersack, with which Paiela adolescents speed the maturation of their bodies and beautify themselves in preparation for courtship, marriage, sexuality and reproduction. To these ends, young men steal away by night to the upper forest (*aya anda*, literally "beauty house"), which is classified as cold and moist. There they avoid fires and treat their bodies with plants and tree sap, while gathering rain in bamboo tubes as a metonymy for the desired growth of fat in skin. Young women, in contrast, depart at the crack of dawn for the lower forest (*wapi*), which is classified as hot and dry. There they treat their bodies with pork grease, soot, and other such elements, while avoiding corpses and necrophagous birds, for fear of becoming "chilled."[31]

The point of these techniques is clear enough. The male body is perfected – that is, made aesthetically attractive and sexually mature – by making it cold and moist, while the female body is given opposite treatment to make it hot and dry. These operations takes place in separate spheres of the wild and times of the day that are associated with the desired elemental qualities. The union of the two bodies prepared in this fashion, however, constitutes a still higher form of perfection, for it is marital coitus, set in the center of domestic space, that effects the union of hot and cold, moist and dry, and thereby generates new life.

Second, there are the medical theories of the Yupno, reported by Jürg Wassman and Verena Keck, and summarized by Andrew Strathern.

30 I have discussed this tendency at much greater length in *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

31 Aletta Biersack, "Horticulture and Hierarchy: The Youthful Beautification of the Body in the Paiela and Porgera Valleys," in Gilbert Herdt and Stephen Leavitt, eds., *Adolescence in Pacific Island Societies* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), pp. 71–91.

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> In bodily terms the person may be in one of three states: hot (*tepm*), cool (*yawuro*), and cold (*mbaak*). To be cool is the ideal condition, associated with "being in the center," being in harmony with others. To be hot means to be in pain or to be angry, to be "above" others, Being cold refers to the state of people whose vital energy has been weighed down or made cold, perhaps as a protection against becoming ill.[32]

Substances, persons, and activities are classified as hot, cool, or cold. Sorcery, for instance, is hot, and medical treatment takes the form of cooling. Sexual processes are also theorized in these terms. Thus, menstrual blood is cold and excessive intercourse is hot, as are the substances used to induce abortion. Labor pains also are hot, but the bodies of mothers in labor are treated with water and ferns that have cooling properties. When the woman has reached the ideal state intermediate between hot and cold, birth takes place and her labor comes to a successful end.[33]

A responsible scholarly narrative that traces diffusion of these ideas from Greece or Iran to the New Guinea highlands is about as plausible as one that would locate the "Indo-European homeland" in the same terrain. Nor can I imagine any good reasons for developing such a story, even were the mediations less tortuous, since theories of influence and diffusion are, most often, crude instruments for asserting the dependence of one group on another and thereby establishing the differential value, power, originality, and "authenticity" of the peoples in question.[34] The problem of Greece and Iran, which served as the point of departure for this study, is the classic site, where authors since Herodotus have textually subordinated Asia to Europe, or vice versa. Instead of perpetuating so dubious a venture, I suggest we would do better to observe, with Lévi-Strauss, that in widely disparate times and places, people have found binary categories like hot and cold, moist and dry, male and female, high and low, east and west, powerful instruments of thought and discourse: items that are "good to think," although I hasten to note that in this and related contexts, "good" surely represents a technical, and not a moral judgment.

32 Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 119.

33 Ibid., p. 120.

34 As witness the controversy sparked by Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 2 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987–1993), on which see Mary Lefkowitz and Guy Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), Robert Boynton, "The Bernaliad," *Lingua Franca* 6 (1996): 42–52, and Martin Bernal, "Whose Greece?," *London Review of Books* 18/24 (12 December 1996): 17–18 (à propos of Lefkowitz).

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CHAPTER 18

Hegelian Meditations on "Indo-European" Myths

1

In the famous lectures he devoted to *Philosophie der Geschichte* between 1822 and 1831, Hegel showed himself well aware of the way contemporary trends in linguistic research were transforming many scholars' understanding of the most ancient history of civilization.[1] Thus, in Part One of his text, Hegel gestured toward the researches that had established a genetic relation between the languages of India and those of Europe. Given initial currency by Sir William Jones in his "Anniversary Discourse" of January 1784, this thesis had been popularized in Germany by Friedrich Schlegel (*Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indie*r, 1808) and was given a much sounder philological basis by Franz Bopp (beginning with *Über das Conjugationssystem der Sanskritsprache in Vergleichung mit jenem der griechischen, lateinischen, persischen und germanischen Sprache*, 1816, published a few years before Hegel began his program of lectures).[2]

Notwithstanding broad and growing enthusiasm for these discoveries, above all in Germany, Hegel treated them with remarkable caution. Although he acknowledged that there were prehistoric connections between India and Europe, he minimized their importance, resisting most attempts to extend the comparison into culture, "spirit" (*Geist*), or history proper. The passage bears citation.

> In recent times the discovery has been made that Sanskrit lies at the foundation of all those further developments which form the languages of Europe; e.g. Greek, Latin, German. India, moreover, was the center of emigration for the entire western world; but this external historical relation is to be regarded rather as a merely physical diffusion of peoples from this point. Although in India the elements of further developments might be discovered, and although we could find traces of their

1 This chapter was originally published in *Papers from the Mediterranean Ethnographic Summer Seminar* 5 (2003): 59–76.

2 For discussions of how scholarship on Indo-European language and culture evolved, see J.P. Mallory, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archeology and Myth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989) and Bernard Sergent, *Les indo-européens: Histoire, langues, mythes* (Paris: Payot, 1995).

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> being transmitted to the West, this transmission has been nevertheless so abstract [so superficial], that that which among later peoples attracts our interest is not anything derived from India, but rather something concrete which they themselves have formed, and in regard to which they have done their best to forget Indian elements of culture. The spread of Indian culture is prehistorical, for History is limited to that which makes an essential epoch in the development of Spirit. On the whole, the diffusion of Indian culture is only a dumb, deedless expansion; that is, it presents no political action. The people of India have achieved no foreign conquests, but have been on every occasion vanquished themselves.[3]

As Hegel recognized, the Indo-European hypothesis posed a grave difficulty for his view of world history as an eminently progressive, dialectical process. In these lectures, he argued that *Geist* works itself out in human events over time, moving toward ever more perfect manifestation in certain sociopolitical and cultural formations. The trajectory he delineated had both temporal and spatial aspects, progress from past to present being complemented by motion from an east ever mired in archaic ways to a dynamic west, marked by growing self-consciousness and a drive to self-perfection. Crucial developments in this process included the gradual emergence of a powerful and efficient state that actively champions freedom and the equally gradual refinement of historical and critical consciousness. As he saw it, the former trend found its ideal fulfillment in the Prussian monarchy, while the latter culminated in his own philosophical system. India, in the sharpest possible contrast, he placed at the beginnings of civilization, chronology, and dialectics. In his eyes, it was characterized by the caste system (the antithesis of freedom), an exuberant mythology (the antithesis of historic consciousness), and an unfortunate tendency to be conquered (the antithesis of state power). In all these ways, India – from the Vedic period to that of the British raj – virtually defined the primitive and helped establish the shape of Hegel's master narrative.

That narrative begins in Asia, where China, India, and Persia form a dialectical sequence of sorts, itself part of a broader sequence that moves from Asia to the Mediterranean and culminates in Protestant northern Europe, each piece of which has its own dialectic epicycles. Nationalist sentiments inflect the structure and content of that story, however, and these become ever more

3 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Books, 1956, a reprint of Sibree's 1899 translation), pp. 141–42. The German text was based on Hegel's manuscripts for his lectures of 1822–23 and 1823–24, as established by Charles Hegel. Cf. pp. 60–61.

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transparent as the Germanic nations are cast as the most modern, progressive, and enviable of history's peoples.

The Germanic being established as the paradigm of the modern and India as that of the archaic, any association of the two could only undercut Hegel's narrative of history as progress. Other authors were able to accommodate the relation between the German and the Indic, however, without compromising national honor, although this typically was accomplished within a narrative of decadence, rather than one of progress. To this end, they idealized such things as deep spiritual wisdom, the speculative daring of mythic poesis, a religious sensibility harmonious with nature, an ethics based on aristocratic values, a racial homogeneity conducive to pride, unity and vitality, or other things they located in the primordial past. Conversely, the processes that eroded these values – industrialization, urbanization, secularization, for example, or others equally constitutive of the modern and cosmopolitan – they tended to regard with abhorrence. Vedic sages could appear as the heroes of such stories, and not just as foils, taking a place of honor alongside Roman Senators, Greek philosophers, and the Germanic warriors of Tacitus's *Germania*. Key passages in the first and second chapters of this last work, moreover, had achieved canonical status and permitted Germans to imagine themselves as a race that had never intermingled with others.[4] The Indo-European (or "Aryan") hypothesis permitted authors like the Comte de Gobineau (*Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 1853–55), H.S. Chamberlain (*Grundlagen der neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1899), and others to extend by millennia the period during which good Germans had preserved this imaginary purity of the race against equally imaginary threats of debasement and mongrelization.[5]

We all know where this second type of narrative leads, and part of my purpose is to warn against the dangers that follow when one presses the Indo-European hypothesis beyond the limits of the strictly linguistic and begins to speculate about groups of people, rather than phonemes, morphemes, and syntax. One should also recognize, however, that the progressive,

4 On the reception of the Tacitean text, see Allen Lund, *Germanenideologie im Nationalsozialismus: Zur Rezeption der 'Germania' des Tacitus im 'Dritten Reich'* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1995).

5 The standard account of how Indo-European linguistics fed into racist ideology remains Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Basic Books, 1974). See also George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). I have discussed the role of mythological studies in *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), as has Stefan Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science*, trans. Sonia Wichmann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

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idealist narrative championed by Hegel is no less ethnocentric, triumphalist, or fraught with peril. The roles it played in motivating and legitimating the projects of the Wilhelmine and National Socialist states are equally cause for scandal and horror. My broader purpose is to warn that a discourse need not be vulgar or patently hateful to constitute such a danger.

2

Rather than dwelling on Hegel's theories of history or his practice as a historian, I need to move on to other topics. In doing so, it is useful to note the one principle of method he introduced that strikes me as most perceptive and productive. This is the one Marx parodied in the opening sentence of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), where he wrote "Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."[6] In truth, there are two such "somewheres" to be found in Hegel. The first occurs at the end of Part III, Section II of the *Philosophie der Geschichte*, where he observed "by repetition that which at first appeared merely a matter of chance and contingency, becomes a real and ratified existence."[7] While this points to recurrence as a mark of that which is dialectically necessary, an earlier passage treats a more stagnant form of repetition. Citing the frequent overthrow of Chinese imperial dynasties as an example, he suggests that certain processes can repeat themselves without progress. Repetition of this sort, he argues, reflects a state of affairs where deep dialectic oppositions have been posed, but not yet transcended. Insofar as the victorious party simply reasserts one side of the opposition, rather than subsuming that which it overcame to produce a novel formation at a higher level of integration, there is no real history, development, or change: only sterile repetition.[8]

It is this second Hegelian perspective that strikes me as the most appropriate model for assessing the repetitive squabbles and scandals that have plagued the study of "Indo-European" mythology from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Although one could develop a more nuanced picture, in the interests of brevity I will limit myself to the three foremost students of Indo-European myth.

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6 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Section I, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, 3 vols. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969) vol. 1, p. 398.

7 Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 313.

8 Ibid., pp. 105–6; cf. p. 63.

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1) Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), who introduced the topic to England and won enormous popularity for it, but was dogged by controversy. Together with Ernest Renan (1823–92), Müller popularized a system in which Aryans were contrasted to Semites (also, less significantly, to "Turanians"). Müller's version of this narrative was less aggressive and discriminatory than that of his French colleague, just as German nationalism was more muted in his writings than in those of his patron, Baron Christian Bunsen (1791–1860). It did peek out, however, in his polemics urging English support for their Anglo-Saxon brethren in the Franco-Prussian War. Inspired by Schlegel and a student of Bopp, Müller's enthusiasms were chiefly focused on Vedic India, which he compared favorably with Homeric Greece. In Hegelian spirit, however, he saw India as having languished ever since, burdened by myth, which he theorized as a "disease of language" that distorted thought and religious sensibility alike. In his view, English colonial rule offered the opportunity for long-lost cousins to reunite and the wealthier, more successful, more intelligent and progressive branch of the Aryan family could now extend a helping hand to their benighted kin. Too generous for full-bore imperialists and missionaries, he suffered numerous career disappointments and became lazy in his later work. Failing to keep abreast of progress in linguistics and anthropology, he repeated false etymologies long after they became untenable and became embattled on two fronts: one (vs. Andrew Lang [1844–1912]) over whether myth was properly understood as an allegory of natural processes and one (vs. Adalbert Kuhn [1812–81]) over what kind of nature allegory it was (sun or rains). By the end of his life, Müller was reduced to a laughingstock and his work – also the study of "Comparative Mythology" that he founded – was utterly discredited.[9]
2) From the mid-1880s till about 1920, no reputable scholar would touch this kind of research, which was kept alive by a few determined, but hopelessly incompetent, students of Kuhn and Max Müller. In the period immediately following the First World War, however, Hermann Güntert

9 On Max Müller, see Richard Dorson, "The Eclipse of Solar Mythology," in Thomas Sebeok, ed., *Myth: A Symposium* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 25–63, Maurice Olender, *Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 82–92, Thomas Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 172–81 and 194–98, Joan Leopold, "Friedrich Max Müller and the Question of Early Indo-Europeans (1847–1851)," *Études inter-ethniques* 7 (1984): 21–32, eadem, "Ethnic Stereotypes in Linguistics: The Case of Friedrich Max Müller," in Hans Aarsleff, Louis Kelly, and Hans-Josef Niederehe, eds., *Papers in the History of Linguistics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1987), pp. 501–12.

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(1886–1948) revitalized the field. Beginning with *Kalypso* (1919), a set of meditations on death written in the shadow of the war, he continued his meticulous philological researches with *Von der Sprache der Götter und Geister* (1921) and *Der Arische Weltkönig und Heiland* (1923), which treats the theme of salvation. His writings turned more aggressive, however, with *Kundry* (1928), where the arguments of *Kalypso* were given a distinctly Wagnerian twist, with a clear anti-Semitic subtext. In 1933, as the Nazis came to power, Güntert – who was then Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at Heidelberg, helped nazify the University by introducing party members and doctrinaire racists to the faculty, while shifting his own research and teaching to *Germanenkunde*. *Altgermanische Glaube* (1937) shows the results of this turn and reflects the influence of his new *extraordinarius* colleagues, Eugen Fehrle (1880–1957) and Ernst Wahle (1889–1981). It is a tortured, terrifying work, using materials of Indo-European myth as models for the heroic, but sometimes tragic, and eminently Germanic struggle against conniving powers of evil (dragons, frost-giants, et al. standing in for Jews, Communists, and others). Other portions of this book were less predictable, however, as when Güntert used the Æsir-Vanir myth to argue that the Germans were products of racial mixture (Æsir = warlike, aristocratic, but rather ugly Nordic Volk; Vanir = rich, beautiful, but non-Indo-European peasant Volk of the south), a thesis he developed further in *Der Ursprung der Germanen* (1934) and *Geschichte der germanischen Völkerschaften* (1943). Güntert urged that Nordic and Indo-European religion be taught to children, in order to inculcate the highest possible ideals, and he railed against (Pauline) Christianity as a religion tainted by Palestine, Judaism, and Semitic values unsuited to Germans (cf. the cruder exposition of this theme in the writings of such ardent Nazis as Alfred Rosenberg [1893–1946] and J.W. Hauer [1881–1962]). Güntert's views on the mixed-nature of the ancient Germans proved unpalatable; however, as did his insistence that the sound-shifts characteristic of Germanic made it linguistically impossible to imagine Germanic territory as the Indo-European homeland. Notwithstanding his eminence and the services he had done them, the Nazis removed him from his Heidelberg position.[10]

10 Discussions of Güntert's career that attempt to minimize the political aspect of his work or put the best possible construction on it include Wolfgang Meid, "Hermann Güntert: Leben und Werk," in Manfred Mayrhofer, et al., eds., *Antiquitates Indogermanicae: Gedenkschrift für Hermann Güntert* (Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 1974), pp. 517–22, and W.H. Goegginger, "Hermann Güntert als Religionsforscher," *Numen* 14 (1967): 150–58. Racist aspects of his work have been treated by Ruth Römer,

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3) Georges Dumézil (1898–1986). Dumézil's famous thesis of "three functions," which he first introduced in 1939, revitalized the field once again and remains influential to this day. His career was marked by recurrent controversy, however, beginning with the determined opposition of Henri Hubert, the chief student of racism in Durkheim's *équipe*. For reasons about which there has been much speculation, Hubert blocked the young Dumézil's career aspirations and forced him to seek work abroad. After Dumézil made his way back to Paris, his theories were contested by ranking specialists in the two traditions most important for his reconstructive research. This included Indologists Paul Thieme (1905–2001), who debated the meaning of "*Arya*" with him and John Brough (1917–84), who implicitly charged him with anti-Semitism for ignoring traces of tripartition in the Hebrew Bible. Students of Rome were equally combative, above all Arnaldo Momigliano (1908–87), who accused Dumézil of sympathies for the style of fascism associated with Mussolini's corporate state and Charles Maurras's integral nationalism, which he reworked in idealized form as the hierarchic structure of the three "Indo-European" functions. Momigliano's attack set off a ferocious debate, which continues to this day. Although Dumézil's defenders have been staunch, they have had to cede important ground. His theories no longer command the influence or respect they once did and his reputation is decidedly clouded, like that of several close associates and strong advocates whose fascist sympathies have long been known: Otto Höfler (1901–87), Jan de Vries (1890–1964), Mircea Eliade (1907–86), Jean Haudry (1934–), Alain de Benoist (1943–), and – to a lesser extent, Stig Wikander (1908–83).[11]

Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1985), pp. 91–99, 141–43. On the role he played at Heidelberg, see Steven P. Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: The Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 27–28, 38, 63, 75–76, and 209–10. I have devoted an essay to the topic: "Hermann Güntert in the 1930s: Heidelberg, Politics, and the Study of Germanic/Indogermanic Religion," in Horst Jünginger, ed., *The Study of Religion under the impact of National Socialist and Fascist Ideologies in Europe* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), pp. 179–204.

11 Appreciative summaries of Dumézil's life and work include C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Theories of Georges Dumézil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 348–50 and Daniel Dubuisson, *Mythologies du XX^ième siécle* (Lille: Presses univérsitaires de Lille, 1993). An interview, Georges Dumézil, *Entretiens avec Didier Eribon* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), provides useful information regarding the relation of his life and work. The most important critical works include Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies on Modern Scholarship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 286–301, Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 126–45, Bruce

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Were one to move beyond the topic of Indo-European myth to that of Indo-European studies in general, the problems would only multiply. Here, one would have to note that the journals devoted to this subdiscipline have consistently been founded and managed by militants of the extreme right. First, there is the *Journal of Indo-European Studies* by Roger Pearson (1927–), a self-styled "expert" on race and intelligence, founder of the Northern League for Pan-Nordic Friendship, one-time director of the World Anti-Communist League (ousted, however, for his extremism), translator and champion of H.F.K. "Rasse" Günther, and publisher of other racist journals: *The Mankind Quarterly* (which has repeatedly been condemned by international anthropological associations), *Northern World* (the mission of which is "to make Whites aware of their forgotten racial heritage and to cut through the Judaic fog of lies about our origin"), *The New Patriot*, and *Western Destiny*.[12] No less unsavory in its associations is *Études indo-européennes*, founded by Jean Haudry (1934–), a member of the "Scientific Council" of Jean-Marie LePen's National Front, an advocate of the North Pole as the Indo-European homeland, and founder of the *Institut d'études indo-européennes* at the University of Lyon III, which was abruptly dissolved and reconstituted to avoid investigation by the French Ministry of Education, which accused it of functioning as "an ideological laboratory of the extreme right" into which Haudry had infiltrated former Nazis, Aryan militants, and holocaust deniers, who supervised dissertations of similar tenor.[13]

Similarly, one might chart the incessant debates about where to set the homeland as support for the views of Marija Gimbutas (1921–94) came undone.

Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 231–68, idem, *Theorizing Myth*, pp. 121–37, and Cristiano Grottanelli, *Ideologie, miti, massacri: Indoeuropei di Georges Dumézil* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1993). The most thorough defenses are Didier Eribon, *Faut-il brûler Dumézil?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992) and Andrea Zambrini, "Georges Dumézil: Una polemica," *Revista di storia della storiografia* 15 (1994): 317–89.

12 On Pearson, see Alain Schnapp and Jesper Svenbro, "Du Nazisme à « Nouvelle École »: repères sur la prétendue Nouvelle droite," *Quaderni di Storia* 6 (1980): 109–11, Scott Anderson and Jon Lee Anderson, *Inside the League: The Shocking Exposé of how Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1986), esp. pp. 92–103, Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 3–9, and Charles Lane, "The Tainted Sources of 'The Bell Curve,'" *New York Review of Books* 41/20 (1 December 1994): 14–19.

13 On Haudry, see Bernard Sergent, "Penser – et mal penser – les indo-européens," *Annales Économies sociétés civilisations* 37 (1982): 669–681 and Anne-Marie Duranton-Crabol, *Visages de la Nouvelle droite* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1988), pp. 201–202 and 230–231. The closing of his institute was reported in *Le Monde* (8 October 1998), p. 38.

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In her account, which amounts to an anti-Soviet inversion of older theories, the chariot-driving Indo-European conquerors figured as the villain, not the hero of the story: the brutal hordes out of Russia who overran the more artistic, more pacific, more gynocentric society that the Lithuanian emigrée and ardent feminist dubbed "Old Europe."[14] It was only a matter of time, however, before this model was challenged by Sir Colin Renfrew (1937–), who stripped the Indo-Europeans of their martial associations, set them in Anatolia at a much earlier date than anyone had previously imagined, and identified them with the earliest diffusion of agriculture.[15] If eminent archaeologists can disagree so thoroughly on all the relevant variables – time, place, mode of production, routes of diffusion – it would seem that almost anything is possible. Since Renfrew wrote, there has been an upsurge of new suggestions from Armenians seeking to set the homeland in Armenia, Caucasians setting it in the Caucasus, and Indians either restoring it to India or insisting that the "Aryan" was an invention of Orientalist scholarship and discourse about them an instrument of colonial domination.[16]

Although one can fault some of those who play these games for playing them crudely, their rules invite such aberrations. Here, I must stress the imaginary nature of "Indo-European myth," "Indo-European language," "Indo-European homeland," "Indo-European migrations," and "Indo-European people." All that exists with certainty are some phonological and morphological resemblances sufficiently numerous and systematic to support the conclusion that the languages in which these occur should be understood as a family. That being granted, the rest is conjecture. The idea of an original proto-language from which the historically attested languages of the family descended is simply one of several hypotheses designed to explain these relations.[17] The existence

14 Marija Gimbutas, *The Kurgan Culture and the Indo-Europeanization of Europe* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 1997), which includes articles that began appearing in 1963.

15 Colin Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

16 For a variety of theories, some more and some less outlandish, see Jean Haudry, *Les indo-européens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), pp. 112–24, Martiros Kavoukjian, *Armenia, Subartu, and Sumer: The Indo-European Homeland and Ancient Mesopotamia* (Montreal: M. Kavoukjian, 1987), Tomas Gamkrelidze and Vyacheslav Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, trans. Johanna Nichols (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), David Frawley, *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization: New Light on Ancient India* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1995), and Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

17 The most attractive alternative remains that proposed by N. Trubetzkoy on the eve of the Second World War, whereby the common features within the Indo-European

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of a proto-people that spoke the language, an original homeland in which they lived, and a prehistoric set of migrations, diffusion, or conquests: none of these are attested. At best, they are inferred or hypothesized, which is to say they are the products of scholarly labor and ingenuity. In their specifics, some hypotheses are more plausible and others less, but none can be proven, for we have no texts written in a "Proto-Indo-European" script and no remains that explicitly announce themselves as "Proto-Indo-European."

It is easy to see how conducive this situation is to incessant debate and ongoing confusion. But the field's proclivity for recurrent scandal and catastrophic collapse also suggests an unresolved contradiction of Hegelian sort. Thus, the construct "Indo-European" derives much of its appeal from its potential to overcome divisions based on language, geography, and cultural particularity. Some of the peoples encompassed in this construct have been bitter enemies over the course of recorded history, from the conflict of Greeks and Persians to the colonial relations of English and Indians, alongside struggles between English and Irish, French and English, French and Germans, Greeks and Romans, Romans and Celts, Balts and Slavs, Slavs and Germans, Indians and Iranians, and others along the way. That these peoples were originally part of the same all-embracing group at some point in prehistory – further, that as a result of that common origin, they share certain words, values, and cultural dispositions that might still serve to unify them – is a virtually utopian vision.

Within this construct there exists, however, another, considerably less idyllic possibility. Thus, instead of being the instrument through which these peoples might transcend their differences and achieve unity, the construct of "the Indo-European" can become an object of struggle among them, insofar as each group labors to reshape it in its own image and claims that they maintain a privileged relation to it. If all are "Indo-Europeans," but one group is more "Indo-European" than the rest, then that group establishes the model to which all ought aspire and against which the others are judged inferior. The unresolved dialectic tension within the "I-E" construct thus pits a desire for

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family were understood as the result of long-term convergence among numerous languages in interaction with one another, rather than divergence from a common parent: N.S. Trubetzkoy, "Gedanken über das Indogermanenproblem," *Acta Linguistica* 1 (1939): 81–89. Others have attempted to see "Proto-Indo-European" as an artificial *lingua franca* that facilitated long distance trade, making Swahili the implicit model, rather than Latin (Franco Crevatin, *Ricerche sull' antichità indoeuropea* [Trieste: Edizioni LINT, 1979]) or the language developed by a loose *colluvium gentes*, peoples with no genetic relation among them (Stefan Zimmer, *Ursprache, Urvolk und Indogermanisierung* [Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft, 1990]). A far-reaching "Theory of Continuity" has also been proposed by Franco Cavazza, *Lezioni di indoeuropeistica con particolare riguardo alle lingue classiche* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2001).

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dissolution into oneness, based on a utopian image of deep prehistory against maintenance of the particular and contentious, based on familiar social identities and recent historic experience.

To date, these antinomies have not been reconciled, and so the game continues. It is not just that scholars differ in the way they reconstruct Indo-European myths such that once-dominant views tend to fall out of fashion. Rather, the whole discourse of "Indo-European" is itself a myth: ideology in narrative form. Failing some grand synthesis that subsumes the claims of unity and diversity alike, also peace and competition, deep past and immediate present, the repetitive rise and fall of theories is likely to continue forever. Alternatively, one could give up on the construct in which these contradictions are so intractably embedded. In the following pages, I will explore a small example of how and why this might be attempted.

3

Here again, I take my lead from Hegel's *Philosophie der Geschichte*: the sole passage where Hegel introduces concrete data of Indo-European. These he treats as an intriguing curiosity, but since they are incidental to the main purpose of his discussion, he gives them no serious attention. Their choice is fortuitous, but the set holds real interest, for he notes that the name of the Hindu lawgiver Manu has been compared with that of the Cretan Minos, which "also occurs among the Egyptians."[18] Indo-Europeanists have long found the first step of this comparison attractive, although the difference in the vowels has proven notoriously difficult to reconcile.

In a small way, this comparison destabilizes the "Indo-European" construct. If one relaxes the rules of phonology enough to admit a relation between Manu and Minos, as seems advisable by their shared identity as primordial lawgivers, there is nothing to keep one from admitting the Egyptian Menes, thereby forcing reevaluation of the ground on which the relation rests. Alternatively, if one rejects the comparison of Minos and Manu, observing, for instance, that the former was a king and the latter a priest, or insisting that Manu founded *dharma*, which is not properly comparable to "law," then the way is barred for the normally accepted comparisons of Indian Manu to Mannus, whom Tacitus says the ancient Germans hailed as the founder of their race (*Germania* 2), for he was neither priest, nor king, nor lawgiver, but a divine ancestor mediating between gods and men.

18 *Philosophy of History*, p. 160, cf. p. 200.

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One could resolve these difficulties, perhaps, by admitting a looser relation among a host of like-named heroes of myth, including those already cited, plus the Iranian Manuš, Phrygian Manes, Irish Manannán (mac Lír) and conceivably others as well (Manassah, Menahem, Mannu-dannu, king of Magan [named in the Sargon chronicle, ANET p. 266]), understanding that these figures are not genetically related, but reflect some complex process of diffusion, influence, shared narratives and conversation among a host of Eurasian peoples over a long prehistory. Similar results could be achieved by aggregating figures on a thematic basis, rather than that of phonology – setting Manu and Minos alongside Moses, for example, plus other primordial lawgivers like Lycurgus, Solon, Numa, and Hammurabi.

Similar issues are apparent as concerns a set of materials Jaan Puhvel and I assembled some years ago, building on earlier researches by Wilhelm Wackernagel, Rudolf von Roth, Albrecht Götze, Hermann Güntert, Franz Rolf Schröder, Stanislas Schayer, R.N. Dandekar, V.N. Toporov, and others.[19] Working with texts drawn from Vedic and post-Vedic India, Zoroastrian Iran, Republican and Imperial Rome, pagan Germany, medieval Iceland, Ireland, and Russia, we reconstructed what I audaciously called "The Indo-European Myth of Creation."[20] Notwithstanding countless differences of detail in these variants, we argued that they all descended from a single prototype, which told how creation resulted from the death of a primordial king and a primordial bovine, who were sacrificed by a primordial priest, himself the king's brother and often his twin. Further, how the dismembered bodies of king and animal provided the raw material from which the world was made, following a system of homologies linking micro- to macrocosm: flesh to earth, bones to stones, hair to plants, etc. Although some specialists have raised objections regarding

19 The earlier literature includes Wilhelm Wackernagel, "Die Anthropogonie der Germanen," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 6 (1848): 15–20, Rudolf von Roth, "Die Sage von Dschemschid," *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 4 (1860): 427–33, Albrecht Götze, "Persische Weisheit in griechischem Gewande," *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik* 2 (1923): 60–98, 167–77, Güntert, *Arische Weltkönig und Heiland*, op cit., Franz Rolf Schröder, "Germanische Schopfungsmythen: Eine vergleichende religionsgeschichtliche Studie," *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift* 19 (1931): 1–26, 81–99, Stanislas Schayer, "A Note on the Old Russian Variant of the Purushasukta," *Archiv Orientalni* 7 (1935): 319–23, R.N. Dandekar, "Yama in the Veda," in D.R. Bhandarkar, ed., *B.C. Law Volume I* (Calcutta: Bhandarkar Oriental Series, 1945), pp. 194–209, and V.N. Toporov, "O Strukture Nekotorykh Arkhaiceskikh Tekstov, Sootrosimykh s Koncepciej 'Mitrovogo Dereva'," *Trudy po Znakovym Sistemam* 5 (1971): 9–62.

20 Reproduced here as Chapter 15.

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the way we treated certain materials, our reconstruction has generally met a favorable reception and is now included in standard handbooks.[21]

Over the years, I have returned to this cosmogonic theme and have considered other narratives that might potentially be regarded as reflexes of the same prototype. These include the castration of Ouranos, followed by the birth of Aphrodite, the Giants, and the Furies from his severed member, as recounted by Hesiod;[22] the dismemberment of Halfdan the Black and the founding of the Norwegian state, as recorded by Snorri Sturluson;[23] Simon Grunau's account of the self-immolation of Widowuto and Bruteno, two brothers who served as the Old Prussians' first king and first priest, respectively;[24] Cambyses' slaughter of the Apis Bull and murder of his brother Bardiya, followed by Darius's murder of a priest named Gaumāta ("Bull-sized?") who impersonated the king, as told by Herodotus Darius, and others.[25] Each of these stories closely resembles parts of the reconstructed prototype, but differs sharply from it in others. Ultimately, I am persuaded that these materials are related to the ones Puhvel and I assembled, but to include them in the analysis would force reconsideration of our labors at so many points that it has never seemed quite worth the trouble to do so.

In truth, the example that interests me most is the Babylonian creation account usually referred to as *Enuma Eliš* ("When on high," the first words of the text), as preserved on tablets discovered at Nineveh, Ashur, Kish, and Uruk, the oldest of which were written down about 1000 BCE, preserving traditions that are perhaps as much as a half millennium older.[26] As is well known, this text treats conflict and succession in heaven, focusing on the overthrow of Tiamat, mother of the gods, and Kingu, her consort, by a set of younger deities

21 The most serious critique has been that of Thomas Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), who focused on our treatment of Roman data. The basic paradigm has been accepted in standard reference works, including Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology*, pp. 254–58, Sergent, *Les indo-européens*, pp. 348–50, J.P. Mallory, *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997), pp. 129–30, and others.

22 *Theogony* 178–206.

23 *Heimskringla: Halfdan the Black's Saga* 9.

24 Simon Grunau, *Altpreussische Chronik* 2.2.3 and 2.5.3.

25 Herodotus 3.29–30 and 61–79, Darius's incription at Bisitun §§10–14. Interpretation of Gaumāta's name as "Bull-sized" was the proposal of Ilya Gershevitch, "The False Smerdis," *Acta Antiquorum Academiae Hungaricae* 27 (1979): 347. The first element in the compound (*gau-*) surely denotes a bovine, but the second element is less certain.

26 Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp.13–14.

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with Marduk at their head. The lines that have always caught my attention are those that describe the victor's treatment of the vanquished, for according to Tablet IV, ll. 128–141, Marduk crushed Tiamat's head, opened her arteries, removed her blood to the outermost extremities of the earth, where it presumably became the waters surrounding dry land. That done, he split her body in two like a bivalve crustacean, fashioning the sky from her upper portion and earth from her lower half. Tablet VI, ll. 23–34 recounts the fate of Kingu, whom Tiamat had made king of the gods and leader of her armies. The blood was also drained from his body, out of which Marduk fashioned the first humans.[27]

When I first considered this text, in the 1951 translation by Alexander Heidel, I noted its similarities to the Indian, Iranian, Germanic, Roman, and Irish myths with which I was chiefly concerned: two victims, one of them a primordial king; bodily dismemberment, albeit of a rather minimal sort; and creation of the world from the sundered bodily pieces. On fuller reflection, however, I concluded that the differences were sufficiently weighty to justify omitting it from my study: no priest; no sacrifice; neither of the diagnostic names associated with the protagonists of the story (*Manu ["Man"] for the priest, *Yemo ["Twin"] for the king); and finally, no bovine victim. There was, however, something disingenuous in the process, since many of the same objections could be raised with regard to myths I included. The story of Romulus and Remus, for instance, had no priest, no sacrifice, no bovine victim, and what is more no cosmogony. Only in some very strange variants treating the death of Romulus does one find the theme of dismemberment, and there no homology connects his sundered corpse to the world.[28] The Germanic account of Tuisco and Mannus was similarly lacking in most of the features that Puhvel and I posited for the prototype, but – like the Romulus and Remus tale – it had the advantage of being "Indo-European."[29] This last point, I now realize, was determinative and introduced a circularity into the argument: when only "I-E" data were admitted (that is, texts written in languages of the Indo-European family), one could cheerfully reconstruct – which is to say, imagine, hypothesize, fabricate or confect – a "Proto-Indo-European 'original.'"

The discovery of a tablet at Sultantepe, published in 1961 by B. Landsberger and J.V. Kinnier Wilson in 1961, later included in A.K. Grayson's additions to the

27 Heidel, pp. 42–43 and 47; cf. the translation by E.A. Speiser in James Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 19), pp. 67–68.

28 This variant is found in Plutarrch, *Life of Romulus* 27, Dionysius of Halicarnassus 2.56, Valerius Maximus 5.3.1, and Florus 1.1.17. Its significance was first recognized by Walter Burkert, "Caesar und Romulus-Quirinus," *Historia* 11 (1962): 356–76.

29 Tacitus, *Germania* 2.

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translation found in the 3rd edition of James Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* filled in lacunae of other manuscripts for the *Enuma Eliš*. The most important of these are in Tablet V of the text and make it more difficult to ignore this text. Thus, lines 45–66 provide more details for Tiamat's dismemberment, telling how Marduk made clouds from her spittle (V 47–49) and the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates from her eyes (V 55), to cite two examples. Some of the body parts specified, moreover, are internal organs that figure elsewhere chiefly in discussions of sacrifice, above all the *kabattu*, which denotes the bodily interior and sometimes the liver (V 11),[30] *libbu*, which can denote heart, abdomen, entrails, womb, or exta (V 63).[31] Others are particularly associated with bovines, including the tail (*zibattu*, V 59),[32] spittle or slaver (*rupuštu*, V 47),[33] and above all the udders or teats (*ṣirtu*, V 57).[34]

I would not want to overvalue this evidence and conclude that *Enuma Eliš* now fits perfectly in the paradigm or that it (therefore) must be understood as showing signs of Indo-European influence. Even without the details supplied by Tablet V, this text should have been part of the discussion and should have suggested that the end result of research should be, not a reconstructed Proto-Indo-European paradigm, but an anthology of thematically-related materials distributed across Eurasia, each of which has its own integrity and interest. Similar arguments could be advanced on behalf of the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Seth, which would have the benefit of extending the anthology into Africa.

In truth, what previously led me to dismiss such comparisons as these is precisely what I now find most attractive about them. Once Akkadian, Egyptian, or other such examples are admitted to the set, one must imagine a very different set of relations and processes than those which can be summarized in

30 *The Assyrian Dictionary* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956–), vol. 8, pp. 11–12.

31 Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 164–67. Most of the examples for use of this term in connection with animals speak of bulls, usually as sacrificial victims. Other species appear more rarely, including sheep and a snake.

32 Ibid., vol. 21, p. 101.

33 Ibid., vol. 14, pp. 414–15. Most often, this term is used of human saliva. In medical texts, however, it frequently is used for the saliva of bulls, which was used as a remedy for a great number of ailments. A related term appears at V 51: *imtu*, which denotes the foam or slaver that forms at the mouths of gods, humans, and animals in states of extreme anger or agitation, a substance that was viewed as poisonous. It appears frequently in *Enuma Eliš*, always in descriptions of Tiamat and the monsters she created, which include vipers, dragons, lions, and rabid dogs (I 136, II 27, III 26 and 84, IV 53). Elsewhere, it is usually associated with vipers and scorpions.

34 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 209.

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an Indo-European *Stammbaum*. Accordingly, I would suggest we replace any talk of "I-E" myth with a much looser discourse of widely diffused Eurasian narratives, understanding that stories do not descend in neat familial patterns, but circulate more broadly and unpredictably wherever people meet, talk, and travel, unconstrained by most considerations of language, still less by those of ethnicity or race.

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CHAPTER 19

From Purity to Law: Avestan *yaoždā* and Latin *iūs*

1

Since 1855, when Adalbert Kuhn introduced the comparison, almost all experts have accepted that Latin *iūs*, Avestan *yaoš*, and Vedic *yóṣ* are cognates.[1] Although some details of morphology remain open to discussion, only once has the equation been seriously challenged, and there are good reasons to reject Oswald Szemerényi's revisionist attempt of 1979.[2] The chief problem remains

1 This paper was originally published as "*Iūs* e i suoi paralleli iranici. Dalla purezza alla giustizia," in Aglaia McClintock, ed., *Giuristi nati. Antropologia e diritto romano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016), pp. 9–25. Adalbert Kuhn, "Sibja, jus," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 4 (1855): 374–75. Vedic *yóṣ* is regularly included in the comparison, but the term only occurs in formulaic passages where it denotes a desired state of indeterminate nature requested of the gods: "prosperity," "well-being," "happiness," or something of the sort. Those who accepted the comparison include Georges Dumézil, "A propos de latin « *ius* »," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 134 (1948): 95–112, A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine* (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1951), pp. 587–89, Jacques de Bie, "*Yaoždā*: Étude d'un terme religieux avestique," *Le Muséon* 68 (1955): 145–61, Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1956–76) 3: 27–28, Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959), p. 512, A. Walde and J.B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 4th ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1965) 1: 733–34, Émile Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969) 2:111–22, Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, "Reflections on *yaoždā,* with a digression on *xvaētvadaϑa*," in Jaan Puhvel, ed., *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 203–10, Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjačeslav V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), p. 706. Subsequent attempts to add Irish *huisse* and Albanian *jē*, by E. Zupitza, "*I* und *J* im Keltischen," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 2 (1899): 191 and G. Meyer, *Etymologische Wörterbuch der albanischen Sprache* (Strassburg: K.J. Trübner, 1891), p. 162, respectively, met a mixed reception.

2 Oswald Szemerényi, "Vedic *šam. šaṁ yoḥ,* and *šam* (*ca*) *yošca*," *Incontri linguistic*i 4 (1979): 159–84, reprinted in Szemerényi, *Scripta Minora. Vol. IV: Indo-European Languages Other than Latin and Greek* (Innsbruck: Innsbrucker Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft, 1991), pp. 172–50 and accepted by Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter: 1996) 2: 420–21. Briefly, Szemerényi argued that the Indo-Iranian terms were not neuter substantives in the accusative (or, alternatively, indeclinables), as they had previously been understood, but frozen genitives of the neuter substantive **āyu-* ("life-force, vital energy") and, as such, etymologically unrelated to Latin *iūs* (pp. 1736–37). First, on the Indic side, in four of its twenty occurences in the *Ṛg Veda*, *yóṣ* cannot possibly function as a genitive. To overcome this problem, Szemerényi removed these passages from consideration, claiming they reflect a later phase of semantic development when the word's original

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reconciling the divergent semantics of the Latin and Indo-Iranian terms, which seemingly operate in quite separate spheres: legal and religious, respectively. Resolving this difficulty depends on analysis of the Latin and Iranian lexemes, since all the Vedic occurrences are in formulaic passages where one can get no more than a vague sense of their meaning.[3]

To date, the most important work along these lines has been undertaken by Antoine Meillet and his students, who perceived a religious background to the Latin term, which helps establish its deep affinity with its Iranian cognate and has profound consequences for understanding the development of Roman law. First, there is the article Meillet co-authored with Alfred Ernout in their *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine*, where they argued that *iūs* orginally designated "formule religieuse qui a force du loi," as reflected in the formula *iūra lēgēsque*, the compound *iūdex* "celui qui dit la formule de justice," and the formulas *iūs ōrāre*, *iūsque fāsque est*, and *iūs iūrāre* "prononcer la formule sacrée qui engage," from which *iūsiūrandum*.[4]

Second, in an important article "A propos de latin « *iūs* »," Georges Dumézil called attention to an Avestan text (*Vīdaēuudāt* 3.38–39) that distinguishes three kinds of rectification for various faults, including payment of fines (*ciϑa-*), corporal punishment (*āpərəti-*), and purification (*yaožda-*). Taking this list as an instantiation of the "trifunctional Indo-European ideology," he suggested that the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family associated **yaoš* with the order-restoring action typical of the first function (purification, a mystico-religious act), while the Italic branch reserved *iūs* for redressive acts of

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form and significance were no longer understood (pp. 1726–28 and 1738). This, however, is supported by no external evidence and is at odds with most notions of Vedic chronology. Second, on the Iranian side, although Avestan *yaoš* occurs in compounds formed with the verb *dā-* ("to set in place, give, establish") in one hundred eighty-three of its one hundred eighty-five occurrences, that verb almost never takes the genitive case (see the listings in Raiomond Doctor, *The Avesta: A Lexico-Statistical Analysis* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004], p. 218 and Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* [Strassburg: K.J. Trübner, 1904; 2d ed. 1961], columns 1233–36; the exceptions are *Yasna* 44.9 and 46.18, the latter of which is open to other interpretations).

3 The twenty occurrences of *yóṣ* in the Ṛg Veda make clear that it denotes a state of being that is highly desired by the speaker, which he requests the gods establish or bestow upon him and those he represents, but it is not at all clear what that state entails. In their attempts to define the term, Hermann Grassmann, *Wörterbuch zum Rig-Veda* (Leipzig: Otto Brockhous, 1873; 4th ed. 1964), col. 1128, offered "Heil, Gluck"; Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), p. 858, "welfare, health, happiness"; Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* 3:27–28, "Heil, Glück / welfare, happiness"; and Benveniste, *Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, Vol. 2, p. 112, "prospérité," but also "bonheur, santé."

4 Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine*, pp. 587.

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the second and third function (application of physical force and extraction of wealth, respectively).[5] In addition, he noted the relation of the funerary rituals called *justa* to the purificatory rites Zoroastrians called *yaožd*ā (a compound of *yaoš* + the verb *dā-*, "to establish")[6] directed against the pollution of corpses.[7]

Finally, Émile Benveniste devoted a chapter to "*ius* et le serment à Rome" in *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*. Less detailed than the discussion of Dumézil, but more elegant in its analytic simplicity, his reading of the data led him to posit an underlying Indo-European root **yous*, which denoted "l'état de régularité, de normalité qui est requis par des règles rituelles." In Iran, this continued to describe the state of physical integrity and perfection required for things and persons participating in sacrificial ritual. At Rome, *iūs* came to signify "la formule de normalité" to which people were expected to conform (as in the formula *iūs dicere*, "to pronounce the formula of normality"), from which developed Roman ideas of law.[8]

All these discussions have merit and they were particularly successful in identifying significant nuances in the Latin vocabulary. They were somewhat less successful on the Iranian side, however, since they all tended to work within the standard translations of *yaožd*ā- as "to purify."[9] Strictly speaking, this is not incorrect, but it is potentially misleading, since ideas of "purification" play so small a role in the religions and cultures of the modern west, where ritual, ethical, and cosmological concerns of this sort have largely yielded to medical

5 Dumézil, "A propos de latin « *ius* »," pp. 97–99.

6 In 183 of its 185 occurrences, Avestan *yaoš* occurs in compounds formed with *dā-*. Voicing of the final sibillant before a dental is normal, yielding the compound verb *yaožd*ā-, on which are built a number of extensions, including *yaožd*ā- (feminine substantive), *yaoždātar-* (masculine agent noun), *yaoždātō.zəmō.təma-* (compound adjective), *yaoždāϑra-* (neuter agent noun), *yaoždāϑriia-* (neuter substantive formed on the agent noun), *yaoždāϑriia-* (adjective formed on the agent noun), and *yaoždāh-* (adjective). For a full listing of the forms, see Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., columns 1233–36, several of which should be changed, consistent with the analysis of Jean Kellens, *Les noms-racines de l'Avesta* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1974), pp. 203–5. A full listing of the occurrences is found in Doctor, *The Avesta: A Lexico-Statistical Analysis*, op cit., p. 218. The two independent occurences of *yaoš* are both found in the Older Avesta, where they probably represent the Singular Genitive of *āiiu-* (*Yasna* 44.9 and 46.18, the latter of which is open to other interpretations).

7 Ibid., pp. 106–11.

8 Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, op cit., Vol. 2, pp. 113–14.

9 Ultimately, the tendency to interpret *yaožd*ā as a ritual act of purification derives from Middle Persian commentaries that consistently gloss the Avestan verb by the phrases *pāk budan* ("to become clean/pure/holy," *Pahlavi Vendidad* 7.12, 7.29, 7.33, 7.74, 8.36, 8.98), *pāk kardan* ("to make clean/pure/holy," *Pahlavi Vendidad* 9.1), *pāk daštan* ("to keep clean/pure/holy," *Pahlavi Vendidad* 21.6), or that associate it in other ways with the quality of *pāk* and *pākīh* ("cleanliness, purity," *Pahlavi Vendidad* 5.21, 8.22, 19.33, and *Greater Bundahišn* 26.86).

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practices of hygienic asepsis. To better appreciate the relation of Avestan *yaožda* to Latin *iūs*, it is necessary to reconsider exactly what "purification" meant in a Zoroastrian context, where issues of order and disorder, the proper nature of creation, the sources of contamination and danger, the destructive effects of time, and the vicissitudes of the human body were all theorized and integrated within a religious and mythological framework.

2

It is thus important to begin by noting a few basic points about Zoroastrian cosmology. First, Zoroastrianism distinguishes two planes of existence: the spiritual and the material, the former of which is uncreated and eternal, while the latter comes into being only at the moment of creation. Second, two primordial spiritual entities share responsibility for creation, but they are antithetical in nature. Of these, the Wise Lord (Avestan *Ahura Mazdā*, Pahlavi *Ohrmazd*) is omniscient and absolutely benevolent, while the Evil Spirit (Avestan *Aŋra Mainiiu*, Pahlavi *Ahriman*) is malevolent and colossally stupid. Realizing that the Evil Spirit must be lured into battle in order to be defeated, the Wise Lord produced a set of material entities (fire, water, earth, plant, animal, and human), all of which were initially pristine and perfect: vulnerable, but otherwise without defect. In response, the Evil Spirit produced vermin and demons, with which he attacked the Wise Lord's creations. Given that neither creator is omnipotent, their initial confrontation had inconclusive results, which is to say that the Evil Spirit could not destroy the good creations, as he wished, but his forces succeeded in penetrating, corrupting, and afflicting them. Finally, Zoroastrianism distinguishes three eras in cosmic history: primordial perfection, i.e. the eternity that preceded the Evil Spirit's assault; eschatological perfection, the eternity that will follow his conclusive defeat; and the nine thousand intermediate years in which we live. This is the era of historic time, characterized by mixture, confusion, suffering, and struggle for all spiritual beings and material creatures.[10]

10 For good discussion of Zoroastrian cosmology, see H.S. Nyberg, *Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéennes* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1929), Herman Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dargestellt* (Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr, 1930), Shaul Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation: Varieties of Religion in Sasanian Iran* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994), and above all, Marijan Molé, *Mythe, culte, et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963).

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The perfection that characterizes primordial and eschatological eternity admits no flaws or evil of any sort. In these eras, all the Wise Lord's creatures are "unaging, undying, undecaying, unputrefying, ever-living, ever-thriving, and free," to quote an Avestan description.[11] The term that denotes this state is *fraša-*, "wondrous, marvellous, ideal," and none of the flawed beings extant in historic time merit that description.[12] Rather, the creatures of our age remain ever exposed to demonic forces that invade their very bodies, introducing a corruption that is moral and corporeal, destructive of moral fiber, material substance, and life itself. This is the sort of "pollution" that *yaožda* is meant to treat: not just filth of a superficial sort, but something more complex and much more threatening.[13]

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11 *Yašt* 19.11.

When they make existence wondrous,
Unaging, undying,
Undecaying, unputrefying,
Ever-living, ever-thriving, and free;
When the deceased arise again;
When indestructability comes to the living;
When existence is made wondrous, by [the Wise Lord's] will.
yaṯ kərənauuąn frašəm ahūm
⁺azarəšəṇtəm amarəšəṇtəm
afriϑiiaṇtəm apuiiaṇtəm
yauuaējim yauuaēsum vasō.xšaϑrəm
yaṯ irista paiti usəhištąn
jasāṯ juuaiiō amərəxtiš
daϑaite frašəm vasna aŋhuš.

For descriptions of primordial perfection, see *Vīdaēuudāt* 2.5, *Yasna* 9.1–5, *Yašt* 9.9–10, 15.16, 17.29–30, and 19.33, *Greater Bundahišn* 3.26–27, *Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* 36.4; for other descriptions of eschatological perfection, *Yašt* 19.94, *Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* 31.10–11, *Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying the Dādēstān ī Dēnīg* 48.100–107, *Ayādgār ī Jamaspīg* 17.14–16, *Greater Bundahišn* 34.32.

12 See further Bruce Lincoln, "Old Persian *fraša* and *vašna*: Two terms at the Intersection of Religious and Imperial Discourse," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 101 (1996): 147–167, reprinted in Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind: Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), pp. 357–74.

13 For the fullest discussion of Zoroastrian ideas concerning purification, see Jamsheed K. Choksy, *Purity and Pollution in Zoroastrianism: Triumph over Evil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989). Also useful are the treatments of Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 107–11 and Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Volume One: The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 294–324. On the nature and effects of the Evil Spirit and his demons, see Chapter Three above.

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3

Purification is thus both necessary and appropriate only during the finite period of mixture and struggle, when it rectifies the damage demonic powers inflict on good creatures. Close reading of the Avestan texts permits one to distinguish three varieties of *yaoždā*, which share broad intentions and qualities, while differing in their particulars.[14] First, there is the treatment of spiritual entities – one's religious consciousness (*daēnā*), good mind (*vohu manah*), soul (*uruuān*), or very being (*aŋhvā*)[15] – which are made more perfect by the recitation of sacred formulae (*mąθras*), i.e. ritual speech acts theorized as the condensation of foundational truths so potent as to drive back all falsehood, confusion, and evil, renewing creation in ways consistent with the Wise Lord's benevolent intentions.[16] Second, there is the treatment of inanimate material objects – firewood, liquid offerings, one's house, fire, water, or the earth itself – which are, once again, made more perfect by the recitation of sacred formulae.[17] In neither of these cases do the relevant texts imagine the item in

14 This corresponds to the three definitions Bartholomae offered for *yaoždā-*, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., columns 1233–34: 1) "heil machen, vollbringen, vollkommen machen"; 2) "rituell vollkommen machen, den religiösen Vorschriften gemäss bereiten, in den gehörigen Stand setzen"; 3) "wieder rituell vollkommen machen, in den normalen Zustand zurückbringen, Verunreinigtes, Verseuchtes reinigen, entseuchen, Infizirtes purifiziren." Similarly, Dumézil distinguished three types of action denoted by this term, "A propos de latin « *iūs* »," op cit., pp. 95–96: 1) "rendre mystiquement complet, parfait"; 2) " mettre rituellement dans l'état qui convient, sans que cela implique réparation d'aucune déchéance ou faute antérieure, p. ex. quand il s'agit d'accessoires du sacrifice"; 3) "remettre en état rituellement, purifier ce qui a été d'abord souillé."

15 "Purification" (*yaoždā*) of the religious consciousness is discussed at *Yasna* 44.9 and *Vīdaēuudāt* 10.19; of one's good mind at *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.20–25; of one's soul at *Yašt* 8.15; of one's being at *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.21.

16 Sacred formulae figure in *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.20–25, and these are implicit in the first two members of the triad "good thoughts, good words, and good deeds" prescribed by *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.21 and 10.19. We still have no thorough study of the way *mąθras* figure in Zoroastrian theory and practice. Lacking that, the observations of Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie*, pp. 143–47, 153–56, et passim are extremely useful.

17 Firewood is specified at *Yasna* 62.10, 71.8, and *Vīdaēuudāt* 18.19; libations at *Yasna* 65.10, *Yašt* 5.8, 5.63, 10.120, and *Vīdaēuudāt* 14.4. All these verses refer to the preparation of materials for use in sacrificial ritual. The broadest discussion, however, is that of *Vīdaēuudāt* 11.1–7.

> Zarathuštra asked the Wise Lord: "Wise Lord, most beneficent spirit, Creator of spiritual beings, Truthful one! How should I purify (*yaoždā-*) a house? How the fire? How the water? How the earth? How the bovine? How the plant? How the truthful man? How the truthful woman? How the stars? How the moon? How the sun? How the endless lights? How (should I purify) all the good things created by Mazdā, which have truth as their seed?" Then the Wise Lord said: "You should recite the purification (*yaoždāθrəm*), Zarathuštra, and then the houses will become purified (*yaoždāta*),

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question has suffered any particular damage. Rather, it is understood to have slipped from its ideal state as a result of the entropy characterizing the historic era, when the Wise Lord's creatures lose their perfection as demonic evils eat away at their being. Periodic rectification of such damage is thus necessary,[18] especially if they are to participate in the sacrificial rites, in which creatures of the present most fully – if only temporarily – recover their primordial perfection, while simultaneously anticipating its permanent restoration at the end of historic time.[19]

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the fire purified, the water purified, the earth purified, the bovine purified, the plant purified, the truthful man purified, the truthful woman purified, the stars purified, the moon purified, the sun purified, the endless lights purified, all the good things created by Mazdā, which have truth as their seed purified." You should recite these words, which are the most victorious and the most healing. You should chant five *Ahuna Vairiia*s (i.e. the most sacred *mąθra* of all). Verses 4–7 go on to identify the specific *mąθra*s, each one taken from the verses attributed to Zarathuštra himself, that one should use to purify one's house [*Yasna* 49.1], fire [*Yasna* 36.1], water [*Yasna* 38.3], earth [*Yasna* 38.1], bovine [*Yasna* 35.4], plant [*Yasna* 48.6], truthful man and woman [*Yasna* 54.1]).

pərəsaṭ zaraθuštrō ahurəm mazdąm. ahura mazda ... ašāum. kuθa nmānəm yaoždaθāni. kuθa ātrəm. kuθa āpəm. kuθa ząm. kuθa gąm. kuθa uruuarąm. kuθa narəm ašauuanəm. kuθa nāirikąm ašaonīm. kuθa strāš. kuθa måŋhəm. kuθa huuarə. kuθa anaγra raocå. kuθa vīspa vohu mazdaδāta ašaciθra. āat mraoṭ ahurō mazdå. yaoždāθrəm srāuuaiiōiš zaraθuštra yaoždāta pascaēta bun nmāna. yaoždāta ātrəm. yaoždāta āpəm. yaoždāta ząm. yaoždāta gąm. yaoždāta uruuarąm. yaoždāta narəm ašauuanəm. yaoždāta nāirikąm ašaonīm. yaoždāta strāš. yaoždāta måŋhəm. yaoždāta huuarə. yaoždāta anaγra raocå. yaoždāta vīspa vohu mazdaδāta ašaciθra. aθa imą vacō drənjaiiōiš yōi aŋhən vārəθraγniiōtəməmca baēšaziiōtəməmca panca ahuna vairiia frasrāuuaiiōiš. yaθa ahū vairiiō ...

18 The daily reappearance of the sun at dawn also helps rectify the damage done by the passage of time, as attested by *Yašt* 6.2.

When the sun rises, the earth, created by the Lord, becomes purified (*yaoždāθrəm*). Running water becomes purified, the water of springs becomes purified, sea water becomes purified, standing water becomes purified. Truthful creatures who are of the Beneficent Spirit become purified.

āaṭ yaṭ huuarə uzuxšiieiti buuaṭ ząm ahuraδātąm yaoždāθrəm āpəm taciṇtąm yaoždāθrəm āpəm xaiianąm yaoždāθrəm āpəm zraiianąm yaoždāθrəm āpəm arəmaēštąm yaoždāθrəm buuaṭ dąma ašauua yaoždāθrəm yå hənti spəṇtahe mainiiəuš.

Cf. *Greater Bundahišn* 26.69:

This too it says (in the Avesta): "Every night, Torpor (*Būšāsp*, also translatable as Entropy) scurries over earth, water, and truthful creatures, just like a pollution. When the sun comes up, it smites the demons over all the earth and makes it purified (*yōjdahr* < Avestan *yaoždāθrəm*)."

ēn-iz gowēd kū har(w) šab +Būšāsp homānāg nasrušt pad zamīg ud āb ud dām-iz ī ahlawān be dwārēd ka xwaršēd ul āyēd hamāg |zamīg dēwān| be zanēd ud yōjdahr be kunēd.

19 Most extensively on the significance of sacrificial ritual, see Molé, *Mythe, culte, et cosmologie*, pp. 85–148, Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd, *A Persian Offering. The Yasna:*

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There is, however, a third form of purification that is by far the most common, to judge from its textual attestations. This is the kind of *yaoždā* that repairs animate beings – those conjunctions of matter and spirit – who have been severely damaged and endangered by direct contact with polluting matter and must be raised back to their normal state, lest they contaminate others. Although one might imagine many kinds of polluting substances, the Avesta mentions one only, which it dwells on obsessively. The substance in question is *nasu-*, a term cognate to Greek νέκυς, closely related to Latin *nex* and *necāre*, which can be translated "corpse-matter."[20]

The book of the Avesta concerned with purification is titled *Vīdaēuudāt*, which literally means "The law for keeping demons at bay" (*vī-daēuua-dāta*, where *dāta* identifies law as that which is laid down, established; cf. Greek θέμις, Sanskrit *dhaman*, German *Gesetz*).[21] It is desperately concerned to control the contamination that emanates from dead bodies and toward that end, it never tires of asking: "Can one purify (*yaožda-*) an X that has been exposed to corpse matter?"[22] In all but the most extreme cases – cannibalism[23] or placing

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A Zoroastrian High Liturgy (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1991).

20 Contamination of this sort prompts purificatory rituals in *Vīdaēuudāt* 3.15, 6.30–32, 6.42–43, 7.10–15, 7.28–31, 7.32–35, 7.73–75, 7.76–77, 8.14–22, 8.35–72, 8.97–103, 9.1–2, 9.3–44, 9.47–48, 19.12–14. On the etymological relation of Avestan *nasu-* to its Greek and Latin cognates, see Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefaßtes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* 2: 145–46, A. Walde and J.B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1972) 2: 153–55 (pace Ernout and Meillet, p. 781), Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1968–80), p. 741, Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, p. 762, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, p. 721.

21 Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, op cit., col. 726–27 and 1441–42, Walther Wüst, *Altpersische Studien* (Munich: J. Kitzinger, 1966), pp. 180–84.

22 For variations on this form of question, see *Vīdaēuudāt* 6.30, 6.42, 7.12, 7.23, 7.25, 7.28, 7.32, 7.73, 7.76, 8.33, 8.35, and 8.97. The broadest expression of this theme is *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.12

> How can I move away from that Lie? From the malicious Evil Sprit? How can I remove corpses from a Mazdā-worshipping community? How (can I remove) direct contamination? Indirect contamination? How can I purify a truthful man? How can I bring purification to a truthful woman?"
>
> *kuϑa hīš azəm kərənauuāni haca auuaŋhaṭ drujaṭ haca dužda aŋra mainiiō. kuϑa hąm.raēϑwəm kuϑa paiti.raēϑwəm. kuϑa nasuš apaiiasāne haca auuaŋhāṭ vīsat yat māzdaiiasnōiṭ. kuϑa narəm ašauuanəm yaoždaϑāni. kuϑa nāirikąm ašaonīm yaoždāϑrəm barāni.*

Other verses, including *Vīdaēuudāt* 5.45–59 where someone or something that has had contact with *nasu* requires the redressive action of *yaoždā,* although these verses describe types of corpse-matter (cadavers or stillborn foetuses, e.g.), without using the term *nasu-*.

23 *Vīdaēuudāt* 7.23–24.

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a corpse in the earth, fire, or water (elements whose purity is to be preserved at all costs)[24] – rectification is possible. But only those who have mastered the requisite doctrines, speech-acts, and ritual practices are qualified to confront the dangers that flow from polluting corpse-matter. Should anyone else undertake the task, he risks compounding the problem.

> (Zarathuštra asked): "If a man performs rituals of cleansing who does not understand the prescriptions of the Mazdā-worshipping religion concerning purification (*yaožd*ā*ϑriiāṯ*), how will he combat the demon that scurries up from the dead onto the living? How does he combat corpse-matter, which mixes up the dead with the living?"
>
> Then the Wise Lord said: "(In that case), the demon Corpse-Matter will become stronger than it was before. Similarly, sicknesses, deaths, and misfortunes become stronger than they were before."[25]

Here, it is important to recall that according to Zoroastrian theory, demons represented – and in some constructions, personified – the various forms of non-being that penetrate, corrupt, and ultimately destroy the Wise Lord's good creations. To judge from their names and the way they are described, each demon is an immoral and aggressive disposition that arises from feelings of emptiness and need, like Envy (*Arešk*), Lust (*Waran*), Appetite (*Āz*), or Greed (*Penīh*); alternatively, a corrosive force like Disease (*Yask*), Suffering (*Sēj*), Old

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24 *Vīdaēuudāt* 3.38–39, 7.25–26.

25 *Vīdaēuudāt* 9.47–48: *yezica hō nā paiti.hiṇcōiṯ yō nōiṯ apiuuatāite daēnaiiå māzdaiiasnōiš yaožd*ā*ϑriiāṯ haca ku*ϑ*a aētaṯ druxš pərənāite yā haca irista upa juuaṇtəm upa.duuąsaiti ku*ϑ*a aētaṯ nasu pərənāite yā haca irista upa juuaṇtəm upa.raēϑwaiieiti. āat mraot ahurō mazdå. mąnaiiən bā spitama zara*ϑ*uštra aēša druxš yā nasuš aš.aojastara varəδaiiete ya*ϑ*a para ahmāṯ as. hā aēte yaska hā aēte mahrka hā aēte paitiiāra hama*ϑ*a ya*ϑ*a paraciṯ*. Cf. *Vīdaēuudāt* 9.1–2:

> Zarathuštra asked the Wise Lord: "Wise Lord, most beneficent spirit, creator of truthful corporeal creatures: In corporeal being, how are the people chosen, those who purify the bodies of those contaminated with corpse-matter?"
>
> Then the Wise Lord said: "(Choose) a truthful man, Spitama Zarathuštra, whose speech is righteous speech, who has studied the sacred formulae, a truthful one who is most familiar with the Mazdā-worshipping religion, with its principles of purification.
>
> *pərəsaṯ zara*ϑ*uštrō ahurəm mazdąm. ahura mazda mainiiō spəništa dātarə ga*ēϑ*anąm astuuaitinąm ašāum. ku*ϑ*a aētaδa aŋhauua astuuaiṇti mašiiāka hąm. vaēnå̊nte tē yōi hąm.nasūm paiti.iristəm tanūm yaoždaiϑiiąm. āat mraoṯ ahurō mazdå narəm ašauuanəm spitama zara*ϑ*uštra yō aŋhaṯ vacō arš.vacō mąϑrəm pərəsō ašauua yō fraēštəm apiuuatāite daēnaiiå māzdaiiasnōiš yaožd*ā*ϑriiāt haca*.

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Age (*Zarmān*), or Want (*Niyāz*) that wears down the body and soul.[26] None of these was part of the Wise Lord's original creation. All are products of the Evil Spirit, who charged them to enter human bodies, where they can multiply, ramify, and spread their noxious effects.

Most destructive of them all is Death (*Marg*), which converts animate creations (plants, animals, and humans) into corrupt matter that stinks, rots, and oozes as it slowly devolves into nothing. The ritual removal of corpse-matter (*nasu*) is thus the chief means through which humans protect themselves from corruption, periodically restoring a state that approaches the perfection God intended for them. In the present, that state is temporary and fragile, but otherwise pristine and ideal. The name given to it is *yaoš* and the formal process that periodically restores it, *yaoždā*: a term that denotes not simply "purification," but the renewal of the ideal state after it has been disrupted by death, disorder, immorality, and evil.

4

This project of restoration is accomplished by rituals including ablutions, baths, and others, whose intensity increases with that of the pollution they seek to reverse.[27] Formulaic acts of sacred speech are always part of the process, along with treatment of contaminated bodies with substances that preserve the purity of the Wise Lord's original creations. The most elaborate of these rites is the *barašnum*, conducted in a specially prepared ground, where nine pits are set in a line running from north (the direction associated with cold, death, and the demonic) to south (the direction with opposite associations) and the whole is surrounded by nine furrows inscribed in the earth (Figure 19.1).[28]

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26 The most complete Zoroastrian treatment of the demons is found in chapter 27 of the *Greater Bundahišn*, on which see Chapter Three above.

27 For the fullest discussion, see Choksy, *Purity and Pollution*, op cit. Also useful is the treatment of Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), pp. 107–11.

28 Good descriptions of the *Barašnum* can be found in Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay: British India Press, 1922), pp. 102–53, William W. Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 162–73, and Choksy, *Purity and Pollution*, pp. 23–52. On Zoroastrian ideas concerning purity and pollution in general, see Choksy, *Purity and Pollution* and Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism. Volume One: The Early Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), pp. 294–324.

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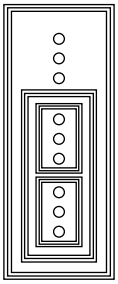

FIGURE 19.1
Spatial organization of the *Barašnum* ritual of purification

Each of the pits and furrows is associated with one millennium of cosmic history, within which the cosmic struggle against evil unfolds, as is each of the nine days in which the ritual is staged. At each of the first six pits, the body of the contaminated person is carefully washed, from head to toe and right to left, with cattle urine (*gōmēz*), a strong disinfectant theorized (like milk) as the fluid essence of all beneficent animals created by the Wise Lord.[29] Between the sixth and seventh pit, the body is dried with pure earth, then washed again at pits seven through nine, this time with pure water. All these substances are intended to remove the material residues of death, decay, and evil, restoring the person's bodily matter to its original state of perfection. Recitation of sacred formulae, i.e. speech acts understood to be particularly solemn, potent, and saturated in foundational truth, take place at each of the nine pits, and is meant to remove not just polluting substance, but falsehood and evil in general.[30]

Although the physical details of the *Barašnum* setting and practice differ markedly from those of a Roman court, these differences cannot obscure the homologic relation between the end these two arenas, institutions, and sets of practices are designed to secure: justice (*iūs*) on the one hand, and "purity" (*yaoš*) on the other, understanding that the latter term actually denotes the approximation of primordial perfection that is the best one can hope for in

29 For different views on the significance of this substance, see Duchesne-Guillemin, *La religion de l'Iran ancien*, p. 111, Choksy, *Purity and Pollution*, pp. 116–19.

30 Relevant here is *Vīdaēuudāt* 19.12–16, where the Wise Lord responds to Zarathuštra's question "How can I move away from that Lie? From the malicious Evil Sprit? How can I remove corpses from a Mazdā-worshipping community? How (can I remove) direct contamination? Indirect contamination? How can I purify a truthful man? How can I bring purification to a truthful woman?" (*kuϑa hīš azəm kərənauuāni haca auuaŋhaṯ drujaṯ haca dužda aŋra mainiiō. kuϑa hąm.raēϑwəm kuϑa paiti.raēϑwəm. kuϑa nasuš apaiiasāne haca auuaŋhāṯ vīsat yat māzdaiiasnōiṯ. kuϑa narəm ašauuanəm yaožda ϑāni. kuϑa nāirikąm ašaonīm yaoždāϑrəm barāni.*). In response, he is told to invoke a series of sacred entitities, culminating in invocation of the Wise Lord himself "most powerful, fairest of form, highest in truth, whose soul is the Beneficent Mąϑra" (*xraϑwištąmca hukərəptəmąmca ašāṯ apanōtəmąmca yeŋhe uruua mąϑrō spəntō*).

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the flawed world we inhabit.[31] Both the Latin and the Avestan terms thus denote the ideal states to which society aspires, but which remain ever threatened and compromised by the countless breaches (*in-iūria*, *a-yaožda*) resulting from evils that are omnipresent in the cosmos and/or inherent to the human condition.

This state of affairs mandates constant vigilance and periodic redressive action by authoritative experts (*iūdex*, *yaoždātar*), who are trained and empowered to pronounce highly consequential acts of speech (legal verdicts, oaths [*iurare*], sacred formulae [*mąθras*]) and to undertake potent physical actions (punishments, cleansings) designed to combat evil, rehabilitate those infected by it, protect others from contamination, and thereby to restore – if only partially and for a fleeting moment – the perfect, ideal state. Although Rome and Iran theorized and elaborated that ideal in different ways, consistent with other aspects of their ideological commitments and cultural orientation, it is misleading to think the one was concerned exclusively with "law" and the other exclusively with "religion." For Romans and Zoroastrians, as for most pre-modern populations, such a sharp distinction of categories had not yet become thinkable.

31 To put it differently, *yaoš* is the closest approximation of *fraša* (on which, see above) that is possible in the situation of mixture, confusion, and incessant conflict that obtains during finite historic time.

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CHAPTER 20

From Ritual Practice to Esoteric Knowledge: The Problem of the Magi

1

There is no doubt that Greek *magos* and Latin *magus* transcribe Old Persian *maguš*, nor that a whole set of terms with pejorative connotations shares this same derivation.[1] Usage of these nouns, however, is sharply bifurcated. Sometimes they denote Persian priests entrusted with the care of the gods (*therapeia theōn*) and highly revered for their wisdom. In other contexts, the same terms reference the most dubious characters: sorcerers, charlatans, practitioners of the black arts.[2] All the derived terminology (*mageia, magikos*, *mageuō*, et al.) reflects this second semantic domain, but in spite of some excellent efforts, it has proven difficult to establish how – if at all – this stereotyped discourse of "magic" relates to anything Iranian.[3] Of necessity, the

1 Thus, Greek *magikos, magianos, mageuō, mageia, mageumata, mageutēs,* and *mageutikos* are all built on *magos*, while Latin *magia* and *magicus* reflect *mageia* and *magikos*, respectively. For the philological details, see Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1973) 2: 156–57 and Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968–80), p. 656 for the Greek; A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mot*s (Paris: Klincksieck, 1951), p. 675 for the Latin.

2 Jan Bremmer, "The Birth of the Term 'Magic'," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126 (1999): 1–12 has observed a bifurcation in Greek discourse, whereby historians and Aristotelian philosophers used the term *magos* respectfully to describe Persian priests and sages, while rhetoricians, tragedians, and early philosophers used the same lexeme, along with others derived from it, to speak of sorcerors and frauds. A similar distribution was recognized in Latin literature by James B. Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin," in Rives, *Magical Practices in the Latin West* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), pp. 51–78, whereby prose authors used the noun *magus* to denote Persian religious specialists whom they treated with respect and generally avoided the adjective *magicus*, while poets favored the adjective, with which they denigrated a variety of scurrilous practices (spells, potions, love charms, fortune-telling, etc.) and generally avoided the noun.

3 At present, three broad lines of interpretation enjoy some measure of currency. The first, championed by Peter Kingsley, "Greeks, Shamans and Magi," *Studia Iranica* 23 (1994): 187–98, idem, "Meetings with Magi: Iranian Themes among the Greeks, from Xanthus of Lydia to Plato's Academy," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 5 (1995): 173–209 imagines fairly direct connections between Iranian figures of a shamanic sort and Greeks interested in such practices. The second, associated with Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés.*

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starting point for these and all other attempts at interpretation is the Iranian evidence, which is slimmer than classicists usually recognize.[4] Just to be clear, let me summarize what little we have to go on.

Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1938) and Giuseppe Messina, *Der Ursprung der Magier und die zarathustrische Religion* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1930), posit a series of mediations in which Persian Magi interacted with Babylonian priests ("Chaldaeans"), then settled in western Asia (where they became known as "Magusaeans"), and thence transmitted some of their traditions to the Mediterranean. The third is the view of Roger Beck, "Thus spake not Zarathuštra: Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha of the Greco-Roman world," in Mary Boyce and Frantz Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism. Volume Three: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), pp. 491–565, who sees relatively little in the way of transmission, connection, or continuity, save "the opportunistic and piecemeal use of the names and persons of the great magi to confer an exotic authority on the diverse arcana of Hellenistic wisdom" (p. 564). All three theories merit consideration, although the second has been largely eclipsed by the third and the first rests on some questionable assumptions, especially as regards the evidence for shamanism in ancient Iran.

4 In addition to the works just named, the following more specialized studies hold considerable interest: Arthur Darby Nock, "Paul and the Magus," in F.J. Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Macmillan, 1933), 5: 164–88, Émile Benveniste, *Les Mages dans l'ancien Iran* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1938), Miltiades Papatheophanes, "Heraclitus of Ephesus, the Magi, and the Achaemenids," *Iranica Antiqua* 20 (1985): 101–61, Gherardo Gnoli, "A Note on the Magi and Eudemus of Rhodes," in *A Green Leaf. Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), pp. 283–88, Carsten Colpe, "Das Magiertum, die Mageia, der Magus. Der Fehlschlag einer Annäherung an das Altfremde durch Herbeiführen einer neuen Verfremdung," in Christiane Reck and Peter Zieme, eds., *Iran und Turfan. Beiträge Berliner Wissenschaftler, Werner Sundermann zum 60. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), pp. 59–76, Jan den Boeft, "Pure Rites: Ammianus Marcellinus on the Magi," in Jan Willem Drijvers and David Hunt, eds., *The Late Roman World and its Historian: Inteerpreting Ammianus Marcellinus* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 207–15, James R. Russell, "The Magi in the Derveni Papyrus, *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 1 (2001): 49–59, Albert de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi. Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1997), pp. 387–413, idem, "The Contribution of the Magi," in Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, eds., *Birth of the Persian Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 85–99, Alberto Bernabé, "Μάγοι en el Papiro de Derveni: ¿Magos Persas, Charlatanes u Oficiantes Órficos?," in Esteban Calderón Dorda, et al., eds., *Koinòs Lógos. Homenaje al Profesor José García López* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2006), pp. 99–109, Phiroze Vasunia, "The philosopher's Zarathushtra," in Christopher Tuplin, ed., *Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2007), pp. 237–65, Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou, "Magi in Athens in the Fifth Century BC?," in Seyed Mohammad Reza Darbandi and Antigoni Zournatzi, *Ancient Greece and Ancient Iran: Cross-Cultural Encounters* (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2008), pp. 31–39, Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, "Extra-Ordinary People: *Mystai* and *Magoi*, Magicians and Orphics in the Derveni Papyrus," *Classical Philology* 103 (2008): 16–39, James Rives, "Aristotle, Antisthenes of Rhodes, and the *Magikos*," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 147 (2004): 35–54, idem, "Apion Περὶ Μάγου and the Meaning of the Word Μάγος," *Mēnē* 10 (2010): 119–32, Philip Horky, "Persian Cosmos and Greek Philosophy:

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First, from the Avesta. For many years, it was thought that one hapax legomenon – the compound *moγu.tbiš-* – named the Magi in its first member, and scholars labored to drag some inferences from the bland passage in which it occurs. As Emile Benveniste demonstrated, however, the structure of the text demands that the otherwise unattested lexeme *moγu-* denoted not a priest, but a level of social integration.[5] The Avesta thus yields nothing.

The Achaemenian inscriptions are not much better. They contain one *maguš* only and he is a cardboard villain serving the interests of propaganda. This is "Gaumāta the Maguš," as Darius the Great named his predecessor.[6] As most historians now recognize, however, the man Darius assassinated and usurped was Bardiya, son of Cyrus. Darius (or, more properly, the scribes responsible for his Bisitun inscription) invented the story that Bardiya had been secretly slain, after which "Gaumāta" stole his identity and the throne.[7] This narrative

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Plato's Associates and the Zoroastrian *Magoi*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 37 (2009): 47–103, and Franco Ferrari, "Rites without Frontiers: Magi and Mystae in the Derveni Papyrus," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 179 (2011): 71–83.

5 Benveniste, *Les Mages dans l'Ancien Iran*, op cit., pp. 6–13. The passage, *Yasna* 65.7, reads as follows.

> Do not deliver us, O Waters … to an enemy of the nation (*haši.tbiše*), nor to an enemy of the tribe (***moγu.****tbiše*), nor to an enemy of the community (*varəzānō.tbiše*), nor to an enemy of the family (*nāfiiō.tbiše*).
>
> *mā nō āpō … haši.tbiše mā moγu.tbiše mā varəzānō.tbiše mā nāfiiō.tbiše māδa nō ahmi frāδāiti.*

6 DB §§10–14 and DBb. For the most recent translations, see Rüdiger Schmitt, ed. and trans., *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achaimeniden* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2009), pp. 40–47 and 93, Pierre Lecoq, trad., *Les inscriptions de la Perse achéménide* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 189–92 and 215.

7 Thus, inter alia, A.T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 107–13; M.A. Dandamaev, *Persien unter den ersten Achämeniden (6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.)*, trans. Heinz-Dieter Pohl (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1976), idem, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire*, trans. W.J. Vogelsang (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), pp. 83–94, E.J. Bickerman and H. Tadmor, "Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis and the Magi," *Athenaeum* 56 (1978): 239–61, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les historiens de l'empire achéménide et l'inscription de Bisotun," *Annales Économies Sociétés Civilisations* 37 (1982): 813–23, Jack Martin Balcer, *Herodotus and Bisotun: Problems in Ancient Persian Historiography* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1987), Stefan Zawadzki, "Bardiya, Darius and Babylonian Usurpers in the Light of the Bisitun Inscription and Babylonian Sources," *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 27 (1994): 127–45, Pierre Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, and Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1996), pp. 109–18, Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "'Lying King' and 'False Prophet': the Intercultural Transfer of a Rhetorical Device within Ancient Near Eastern Ideologies," in A. Panaino and G. Pettinato, eds., *Ideologies as Intercultural Phenomena* (Milan: University of Bologna, 2002), pp. 215–43, and Bruce Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind": Achaemenian Religion and the Imperial Project* (Louvain: Peeters, 2012), pp. 375–92. Those who continue to take Darius's

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not only represented Darius's regicidal *coup d'état* as the restoration of legitimate rule, it doubly discredited his predecessor, for a *maguš* had no possible claim to the kingship, being a Mede (not a Persian)[8] and a priest (not a warrior-aristocrat).[9] As with Avestan, Old Persian gives us little to go on, save the fact that Magi were priests.

Only with the archaeological remains from Persepolis do we get something useful, including a seal (Figure 20.1) that shows two priests, one of whom holds twigs before a fire altar, while the other is oriented toward the mortar and pestle on a table next to the altar.[10] The latter priest can be identified as a Magus by the headgear he wears, complete with flaps that cover his mouth. According to Strabo, Magi wore this when performing sacrifice and tending a fire altar, with the flaps protecting the sacred flame from defilement by their breath.[11]

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account at face value include Josef Wiesehöfer, *Der Aufstand Gaumatas und die Anfänge Dareios I* (Bonn: Habelt, 1978), Ilya Gershevitch, "The False Smerdis," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 27 (1979): 337–52, and Josef Elfenbein, "The Oldest Detective Story in World History," *Orientalia Suecana* 51/52 (2002–3): 103–16.

8 The Babylonian version of the inscription DB_{Bab} §10 adds a piece of information left implicit in the Old Persian, identifying Darius's adversary as "a Mede, Gaumāta, a Magus" (*lú KUR* ***ma-da-a-a*** *[I]Gu-ma-a-tú ma-gu-šu*). This detail confirms Herodotus 1.101 on the Median identity of the Magi.

9 In a bold and oft-cited article, Bickerman and Tadmor, "Darius I, Pseudo-Smerdis and the Magi," op cit., pressed the case further, arguing that portrayal of "Gaumāta" as a *maguš* helped explain the initial success of his masquerade, since the Magi were notorious masters of shape-shifting, illusion, and "magic." Ingenious though it be, the argument is circular: supported by no Iranian evidence, it projects Greco-Roman stereotypes back into Achaemenid Persia.

10 This was published as Seal No. 20 by Erich Schmidt, *Persepolis. II: Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), Plate 7, and discussed by him at p. 55. It was also republished by Raymond A. Bowman, *Aramaic Ritual Texts from Persepolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), Plate 1a and b, and discussed at p. 6.

11 Strabo 15.3.15:

> In Cappadocia there is a large tribe of the Magi who are called *Pyraithoi* ("Fire-kindlers") and there are many temples of the Persian gods. They do not sacrifice with a sacrificial knife, but by striking the victim with a log, as with a club. There are also fire-sanctuaries (*pyraitheia*), remarkable sacred enclosures, in the middle of which is the altar with much ash, where the Magi guard an inextinguishable fire. Entering there each day, they chant for about an hour, holding a bundle of wands before the fire and wearing felt headgear with cheekpieces on each side falling down far enough to hide the lips.
>
> ἐν δὲ Καππαδοκίᾳ (πολὺ γὰρ ἐκεῖ τὸ τῶν Μάγων φῦλον, ὃι καὶ πύραιθοι καλοῦνται· πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τῶν Περσικῶν θεῶν ἱερά), οὐδὲ μαχαίρᾳ θύουσιν, ἀλλὰ κορμῷ τινι ὡς ἂν ὑπέρῳ τύπτοντες. ἔστι δὲ καὶ πυραιθεῖα, σηκοί τινες ἀξιόλογοι ἐν δὲ τούτοις μέσοις βωμός, ἐν ᾧ πολλή τε σποδός, καὶ πῦρ ἄσβεστον φυλάττουσιν οἱ Μάγοι· καὶ καθ' ἡμέραν δὲ εἰσιόντες, ἐπᾴδουσιν ὥραν σχεδόν τι πρὸ τοῦ πυρὸς τὴν δέσμην τῶν ῥάβδων ἔχοντες, τιάρας περικείμενοι πιλωτὰς καθεικυίας ἐκατέρωθεν μέχρι τοῦ καλύπτειν τὰ χείλη τὰς παραγναθίδας.

Also relevant is the preceding paragraph.

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FIGURE 20.1
Seal 20 from Persepolis (Figure 7 in Schmidt 1957; photo courtesy of the Oriental Institute)

This scene represents preparations for a sacrificial offering of *hauma*, a ritual commonly performed at the Persian capital, as evidenced by the many mortars and pestles found there.[12]

Persepolis also contained the administrative records known as the Fortification Tablets, where individuals identified as Magi (Elamite *makuš*, plural *makušpe*) appear in thirty-three of the published tablets.[13] All of these

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> [The Magi] sacrifice differently to fire and water. Indeed, they add dry wood without bark to the fire, placing fat on it from above. Then they set it on fire from below, pouring oil down on it, not blowing, but fanning the flames. Those who blow on the flames or place corpses or cow-dung on a fire, they put to death.
>
> διαφερόντως δὲ τῷ πυρὶ καὶ τῷ ὕδατι θύουσι, τῷ μὲν πυρί προστιθέντες ξερὰ ξύλα τοῦ λέπτους χωρὶς πιμελὴν ἐπιτιθέντες ἄνωθεν· εἶθ' ὑφάπτουσιν ἔλαιον καταχέοντες, οὐ φυσῶντες ἀλλα ριπίζοντες· τοὺς δὲ φυσήσαντας ἢ νεκρὸν ἐπὶ πῦρ θέντας ἢ βόλβιτον θανατοῦσι·

See further, de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, op cit., pp. 144–50, also Boyce and Grenet, *History of Zoroastrianism*, op cit., 3: 272–73, 295–97.

12 Ninety-seven mortars and eighty pestles were excavated from the ruins of Persepolis, a quantity Schmidt judged "astonishing" (*Persepolis* 2: 55). Many of these bear Aramaic inscriptions with the names of their donors, most of them military officials who served as patrons for the sacrifices in which these implements were used. These and other related objects were discussed by Schmidt, *Persepolis* 1: 156–200 and 2: 53–56, see also Plates 23 and 24. The inscriptions were published, translated, and discussed by Bowman, *Aramaic Ritual Texts from Persepolis*, pp. 71–185. While these materials are invaluable, Bowman's suggestion that they bear evidence of a proto-Mithraic cult within the Achaemenid military (pp. 35–37) is quite misguided, resting on now-abandoned theories of Mithraism. Theophoric personal names also show the popularity of *hauma*-rituals at Persepolis, for which see J. Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid period (ca. 550–330 B.C.). Lexicon of Old Iranian Proper Names and Loanwords, Attested in Non-Iranian Texts* (Louvain: Peeters, 2007), pp. 198–99.

13 The texts published in Richard T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969) are designated by the sigla PF; those in Wouter

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enumerate the supplies individual Magi received from the imperial apparatus for use in the *lan*-sacrifice (23x, 70% of the total) or ritual prestations to individual gods (10x, 30%).[14] As these statistics suggest, Magi were closely associated with the *lan*, the most prominent Achaemenid ritual, performed every month and in some locales, perhaps even daily.[15] It has received considerable attention in recent years, most exhaustively from Wouter Henkelmann, who has established that the *lan* had a deep Elamite prehistory, could be performed by several different kinds of priest (although most often by a *maguš*), might be offered to various deities (who were normally not specified), and was supported by the royal treasury, which gave generous supplies of beer, wine, grain, fruit, and meat, usually on an annual basis, to the priests entrusted with its performance.[16] These goods were presented to deities within the ritual context and then consumed by priests, being simultaneously "offerings" (for the gods) and "rations" or "stipends" (for the officiants).[17]

This arrangement – which was also true of the sacrifices offered at royal tombs[18] – permits us to establish a fact of cardinal importance. Within the

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Henkelmann, *The Other Gods Who Are: Studies in Elamite-Iranian Acculturation based on the Persepolis Fortification Texts* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Nabije Oosten, 2008), by NN.

14 The texts that connect a magus to the *lan*-offering are PF 757, 758, 759, 768, 769, 772, 1951, 1955, and 2036, NN 598, 1115, 1262, 1602, 1829, 1836, 2183, 2211, 2243, 2265, 2268, and 2342. PF 768 and 1960 connect men who are named as Magi elsewhere to the *lan*, but do not cite their priestly title. PF 1798, 1957, NN 2184, 2200, 2206, 2290, 2358, 2362, 2370, and 2479 connect Magi to offerings whose divine recipients are named, but do not make mention of *lan*.

15 Although other types of priest also performed the *lan*, Magi did so most frequently and they alone bore the title "*lan*-performer" (*lan-lirira*), as in PF 757, 758, 768, 2036, NN 598, 1115, 1602, 1836, and 2243. On the frequency of *lan*-offerings, see Henkelmann, *The Other Gods Who Are*, op cit., p. 210.

16 Henkelmann, *The Other Gods Who Are*, op cit., pp. 181–304. See also Shahrokh Razmjou, "The *Lan* Ceremony and Other Ritual Ceremonies in the Achaemenid Period: The Persepolis Fortification Tablets," *Iran* 42 (2004): 103–17. Earlier studies were inclined to connect the Magi even more tightly to the *lan* ritual, e.g. Heidemarie Koch, *Die religiösen Verhältnisse der Dareioszeit. Untersuchungen an Hand der elamischen Persepolistäfelchen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), pp. 129–41 and 156–58, Morrison Handley-Schachler, "The *Lan* Ritual in the Persepolis Fortification Texts," *Achaemenid History* 11 (1998): 195–204.

17 On the nature of such payments (which were designated by the Elamite term *gal*), see Henkelmann, *The Other Gods Who Are*, pp. 281–91, 296–97, and 303–4.

18 These are the *šumar* and *bašur* sacrifices, offered at royal burial sites according to the Fortification Tablets (NN 1700, 1848, 2174, 2259, PF 302, 1854), on which see Henkelmann, *The Other Gods Who Are*, pp. 287–89. While these texts do not specify what kind of priests were involved, Greek sources, which provide detailed and accurate descriptions, make Magi responsible for the offerings.

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Achaemenid imperial order, Magi enjoyed royal patronage, such that their priestly labors provided them with a steady income. Royal support enabled them to devote themselves to the practice of sacrifice, perhaps also to theoretical speculation on the rites they performed.[19]

Recent work in comparative philology has also helped refine our understanding of the title *maguš*. Building on a splendid insight of Jean Kellens,[20] Hanns-Peter Schmidt and Almut Hintze have explored related terms in Indo-Iranian – Old Avestan *maga* and Vedic *maghá* – that describe the principle of reciprocity governing Indo-Iranian sacrifice.[21] As Hintze further observed, the related adjectives *magauuan-* (Avestan) and *maghávan-* (Vedic) are used only of the patron and deity, never of the priest.[22] Apparently, these

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Inside the enclosure, toward the ascent leading to the tomb, was a small dwelling that had been made for the Magi, who guarded Cyrus's tomb from the time of Cambyses, son of Cyrus, sons taking over the guard from their fathers. Each day, a sheep was given to them by the king, also prescribed amounts of wheat-meal and wine, and each month there was a horse for sacrifice to Cyrus. (Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.29.7; cf. Strabo 15.3.7)

εἶναι δὲ ἐντὸς τοῦ περιβόλου πρὸς τῇ ἀναβάσει τῇ ἐπὶ τὸν τάφον φερούσῃ οἴκημα σμικρὸν τοῖς Μάγοις πεποιημένον, οἳ δὴ ἐφύλασσον τὸν Κύρου τάφον ἔτι ἀπὸ Καμβύσου τοῦ Κύρου, παῖς παρὰ πατρὸς ἐκδεχόμενος τὴν φυλακήν. καὶ τούτοις πρόβατόν τε ἐς ἡμέραν ἐδίδοτο ἐκ βασιλέως καὶ ἀλεύρων τε καὶ οἴνου τεταγμένα καὶ ἵππος κατὰ μῆνα ἐς θυσίαν τῷ Κύρῳ.

19 Speculation on the symbolism and cosmic import of sacrifice was a major concern for other priests within the Indo-Iranian tradition, as evidenced by the Brahmins of Vedic India and the Mobeds of Sassanian Iran, the latter title being derived from Old Iranian **Magu-pati*, i.e. "Chief Maguš."

20 Jean Kellens, "Characters of Ancient Mazdaism," *History and Anthropology* 3 [1987]: 248. Kellens showed that use of *maga-* in Yasna 53. 7 involved a salacious play on words that confused neuter and masculine forms of the noun, the former of which means "gift" and the latter "hole." This occurrence led earlier scholars to think all the Old Avestan occurences of *maga-* were in the masculine, which led them to waver on whether it was best compared with Younger Avestan *mαγa-* (masc.), "hole, pit" or to Vedic *maghá-* (neut.), "wealth, bounty, gift." Noting that in all occurrences save *Yasna* 53.7, the forms attested for *maga-* could be either masculine or neuter, Kellens was able to establish it is properly neuter and thus cognate to Vedic *maghá-*, which opens the door for its proper understanding.

21 Hanns-Peter Schmidt, "Gathic *maga* and Vedic *maghá*," *K.R. Cama Oriental Institute International Congress Proceedings* (Bombay: K.R. Cama Oriental Institute, 1991), pp. 220–39, Almut Hintze, "'Do ut des': Patterns of Exchange in Zoroastrianism," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3 (2004): 27–45. See also Martin Schwartz, "The Indo-European Vocabulary of Exchange, Hospitality, and Intimacy (The Origins of Greek *ksénos, sún, phílos*; Avestan *xšnu-, xšąnman-*, etc.): Contributions to Etymological Methodology," *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (1982): 188–204.

22 Hintze, "'Do ut des'," op cit., pp. 31–32. In similar fashion, Bernfried Schlerath, "Die Gathas des Zarathustra," *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 57 (1962): 579 observed that Vedic *maghá-* was used only of prestations passing from a deity to the patron and the patron

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terms characterize actors whose wealth and power permitted them to commit material assets to the process of sacrificial exchange. In contrast, the third actor contributes the non-material resources that set that process in motion, i.e. his mastery of sacred speech, ritual theory, and details of practice.[23] In this capacity, he is designated *magu-*, while the others are *magauuan-*.[24] As Hintze describes the system diagramed in Figure 20.2 below: "All three participants were interdependent: the gods required the poet's praise, the poet needed the patron to employ and pay him, while the patron needed both the poet to interact with the gods, and the latter to renew his prosperity. The ordinary man was not able to enter into a direct relationship with the deity, but had to hire a priest who, by performing the ritual, could do so on his (the patron's) behalf. Only the poet-priest was in a position to interact with the gods, so that the latter might confer on the patron what he desired."[25]

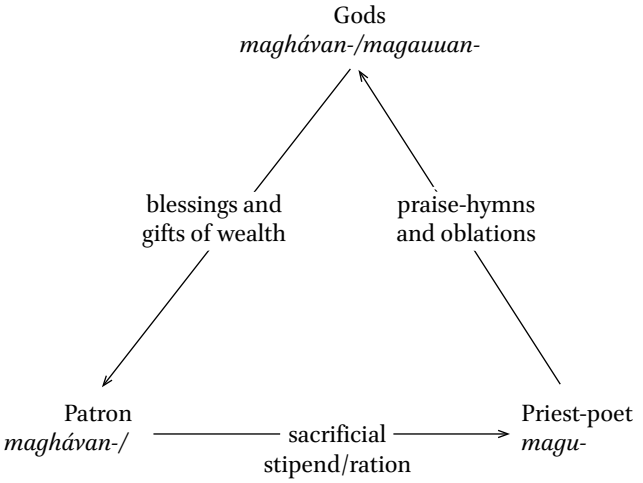

FIGURE 20.2 Indo-Iranian relations of sacrificial exchange and reciprocity (after Hintze 2004: 28, slightly modified)

to the priest, but never from the priest to the deity, but Schmidt, "Gathic *maga* and Vedic *maghá*," op cit., p. 221 has located at least one instance (Ṛg Veda 6.12.2) that fills out the third leg of the triangular relation.

23 The logic of the system is quite elegant, for the patron contributes material goods, to which the priest adds non-material, and the deity responds with goods of both sorts.

24 Cf. Schmidt, "Gathic *maga* and Vedic *maghá*," p. 232, Hintze, "'Do ut des'," pp. 30–31.

25 Hintze, "'Do ut des'," p. 28.

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Hintze stressed the fact that the gods were dependent on priests, not for material sustenance, but for the praise the latter offered in the meticulously crafted hymns they composed and sung. Neither the Fortification Tablets, nor the Old Persian inscriptions connect the Magi to song (indeed, they give no information about any aspect of ritual practice), but the sacrificial hymns of the Avesta and Vedas were all meant to be chanted, while numerous classical sources connect Magian sacrifice with song.[26] The earliest and most important of these is the following passage from Herodotus.

> (Among the Persians), it is not permitted for the sacrificer to pray for good things for himself alone, so he prays for good to come into being for all Persians and for the King, as the sacrificer is himself included in "all the Persians." Then, having cut the victim into pieces limb from limb, he boils the meat, and having strewn the softest grass, particularly clover, he then places all the meat on top of this. When this is arranged, a man – a Magus – standing beside him, chants a theogony (they say the song is of that sort), for it is not their custom to perform sacrifices without a Magus. Having waited a little while, the sacrificer carries off the pieces of meat and uses them as he pleases.[27]

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26 Thus, inter alia, column six of the Derveni Papyrus, Strabo 15.3.14–15, Ammianus Marcellinus 23.6.35, Diogenes Laertius 1.6.

27 Herodotus 1.132: ἐωυτῷ μὲν δὴ τῷ θύοντι ἰδίῃ μούνῳ οὔ οἱ ἐγγίνεται ἀρᾶσθαι ἀγαθά, ὁ δὲ τοῖσι πᾶσι Πέρσῃσι κατεύχεται εὖ γίνεσθαι καὶ τῷ βασιλέϊ. ἐν γὰρ δὴ τοῖσι ἅπασι Πέρσῃσι καὶ αὐτός γίνεται. ἐπεὰν δὲ διαμιστύλας κατὰ μέλεα τό ἱρήιον ἐψήσῃ τὰ κρέα, ὑποπάσας ποίην ὡς ἁπαλωτάτην, μάλιστα δὲ τό τρίφυλλον, ἐπὶ ταύτης ἔθηκε ὧν πάντα τὰ κρέα. διαθέντος δὲ αὐτοῦ Μάγος ἀνὴρ παρεστεὼς ἐπαείδει θεογονίην, οἵην δὴ ἐκεῖνοι λέγουσι εἶναι τὴν ἐπαοιδήν. ἄνευ γὰρ δὴ Μάγου οὔ σφι νόμος ἐστὶ θυσίας ποιέεσθαι. ἐπισχὼν δὲ ὀλίγον χρόνον ἀποφέρεται ὁ θύσας τὰ κρέα καὶ χρᾶται ὅ τι μιν λόγος αἱρέει.

Strabo 15.3.13 gives a description that is almost identical on most points, except a) he makes the Magus responsible for dismemberment of the victim, and b) he explains that the gods receive the victim's *psykhē*, not its material substance.

> [Persians and Medes] sacrifice in a purified place, praying earnestly and bringing forward the wreathed victim. After the Magus, who directs the ritual action, has cut the meat into pieces, they all disperse, having distributed the portions and having assigned no portion to the gods, for they say the god needs the victim's soul and nothing else. Still, some people say they place a small bit of the omentum on the fire.
>
> θύουσι δ' ἐν καθαρῷ τόπῳ κατευξάμενοι παραστησάμενοι τὸ ἱερεῖον ἐστεμμένον· μελίσαντος δὲ τοῦ Μάγου τὰ κρέα τοῦ ὑφηγουμένου τὴν ἱερουργίαν ἀπίασι διελόμενοι, τοῖς θεοῖς οὐδὲν ἀπονείμαντες μέρος· τῆς γὰρ ψυχῆς φασι τοῦ ἱερείου δεῖσθαι τὸν θεόν ἄλλου δὲ οὐδενός· ὅμως δὲ τοῦ ἐπίπλου τι μικρὸν τιθέασιν, ὡς λέγουσί τινες, ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ.

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Several features described here are familiar from the preceding discussion, including the triangular relations of king, sacrificer, and deity, and the way the non-material aspect and sign-value of the victim (i.e. its "spirit") is conveyed to the gods, while its material substance and use-value (here, its meat) is reserved for the officiant. Also noteworthy is the magus's song, which is explicitly and emphatically identified as a theogony, a term that should be taken literally.[28] It is an account of creation – and not the praise-hymn of a specific deity – that the Magus sings over the meticulous placement and solemn display of the victim's disjointed members. This is no accident, as I have argued elsewhere, for the relation of sacrifice to creation is one of the master themes in ancient Indo-Iranian religions.[29] Sometimes creation is realized through the first sacrifice, sometimes sacrifice repeats, renews, or reverses creation, and sometimes sacrificial dismemberment models the cosmogonic transition from One to Many.

It is this last pattern that dominates Achaemenian religion, where creation accounts stand at the head of twenty-three different royal inscriptions, describing how the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazdā) established four ideal phenomena (Earth, Sky, Man, and Happiness, all consistently named in the singular), whose perfect unity was subsequently shattered (presumably by "the Lie").[30] As a result, countless different terrains and polities, each with its own distinctive qualities and imperfections, replaced the primordial oneness of Earth, while nationalities and races did the same for Man, and absolute, total Happiness

28 Most who have commented on this passage have assumed that Herodotus meant to describe a god's praise hymn, something on the order of an Avestan *Yašt*, as, e.g., de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi*, op cit., p. 118. The text, however, is quite clear and the phrase *hoiēn dē ekeinoi legousi einai tēn epaoidēn* marked the extent to which the Magian song differed from what Greeks would consider the appropriate priestly accompaniment to sacrifice. Use of the term *theogoniē* (rather than *hymnos*, e.g.), is both marked and motivated. Herodotus uses this word only on one other occasion, with explicit reference to Hesiod's authoritative account of how the gods and cosmos came to be (2.53).

29 Specifically on Herodotus's description of Persian sacrifice, Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), op cit., pp. 54–56, in connection with the broader discussion of pp. 1–64. See also *Priests, Warriors and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 69–95, *"Happiness for Mankind"*, pp. 446–61 (co-authored with Clarisse Herrenschmidt), and Chapters Two, Eleven, and Thirteen above.

30 The fullest study of subtle variations among the twenty-three examples is Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les créations d'Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58. I have discussed the content of the myth in *"Happiness for Mankind"*, pp. 10–18, 173–86, 202–4, et passim.

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was replaced by varied flora, fauna, and material substances, each with its own peculiarities, utility, and capacity to give pleasure.

The great project undertaken by the Achaemenians was the restoration of original perfection as created by the Wise Lord, which involved re-unification of all the good things now scattered across the globe. These ambitions informed numerous endeavors, including palace construction,[31] the royal table,[32] and paradise gardens.[33] In these and other practices – also, more broadly in the empire's expansion and extraction of tribute – a concern for diversity figures prominently as something to be catalogued in the first instance, then transcended via processes of imperial (re-)unification.

3

Given this, it is intriguing to encounter a "magical" text structured along lines that reflect the same concerns as Achaemenian banquets, gardens, palaces, and tribute. The text in question, titled *Chirocmeta* ("Handiworks," from an underlying Greek Χειρό-κμητα), no longer exists, but was summarized by Pliny. He attributed its authorship to Democritus, a man he – like many others – regarded as having studied with Magi and as one of the first Greeks to teach

31 As spelled out in the foundation inscriptions from Susa (DSf and DSaa). On the significance of these texts and designation of the Susa palace as a "wonder" (*fraša*), see Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*, pp. 369–74.

32 As described in Polyaenus 4.3.32 and discussed by David Lewis, "The King's Dinner (Polyaenus IV.3.32)," *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987): 79–87, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Persian Food. Stereotypes and Political Identity," in John Wiilkins, David Harvey, and Mike Dobson, eds., *Food in Antiquity* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), pp. 286–302, Pierre Briant, "Table du roi, tribut et redistribution chez les Achéménides" in Pierre Briant and Clarisse Herrenschmidt, eds. *Le tribut dans l'empire Perse* (Paris: Peeters, 1989), pp. 35–44, idem, *Histoire de l'empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Leiden: Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1996), 297–304.

33 On which, see Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*, pp. 3–19 and 59–79, Wolfgang Fauth, "Der königliche Gärtner und Jäger im Paradeisos: Beobachtungen zur Rolle des Herrschers in der vorderasiatischen Hortikultur," *Persica* 8 (1979): 1–53, Christopher Tuplin, "The Parks and Gardens of the Achaemenid Empire," in Tuplin, *Achaemenid Studies* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), pp. 80–131, Anders Hultgård, "Das Paradies: vom Park des Perserkönigs zum Ort der Seligen," in M. Hengel et al., eds., *La cité de dieu = Die Stadt Gottes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 1–43, and Pierre Briant, "A propos du roi-jardinier: remarques sur l'histoire d'un dossier documentaire," *Achaemenid History* 13 (2003): 33–49.

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and write on magic.[34] Columella more plausibly assigned this text to a prolific pseudepigrapher of the 2nd century: Bolus of Mendes, who worked in the library of Alexandria and frequently assumed the Democritean persona.[35] Whatever its origins or ultimate sources, several features enumerated in Pliny's summary seem to reflect Persian traditions and styles of thought.[36]

Most immediately, *Chirocmeta* catalogues fourteen exotic plants, each with its own unique properties, uses, and geographic origins. The list begins with the *Aglaophotis* ("Brilliant radiance"), an Arabian plant of outstanding color that

34 Pliny, *Natural History* 24.160: *Democriti certe Chirocmeta esse constat. at in his ille post Pythagoram Magorum studiossimus quanto portentosiora tradit!* Regarding the tradition of Democritus having studied with the Magi, cf. *Natural History* 30.9–10, Diogenes Laertius 9.34, Aelian, *Varia Historia* 4.20, the Suda, under Δημόκριτος, Hippolytus, *Refutationes* 1.13, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.15.69.6, Philostratus, *Vitae sophistarum* 10.13.1. Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 9, praefatio 14 also attributed this text to Democritus, as did Diogenes Laertius 9.49 (if one accepts Diels' emendation of Χερνικὰ to Χειρόκμητα).

35 Columella, *Res Rustica* 7.5.17: *Sed Aegyptiae gentis auctor memorabilis Bolus Mendesius, cuius commenta, quae appellantur Graece Χειρόκμητα, sub nomine Democriti falso produntur.* Pliny, *Natural History* 30.10 notes that many suspected the magical works attributed to Democritus were not actually his. On Bolus, see Jean Salem, *La légende de Démocrite* (Paris: Kimé, 1996), pp. 115–39, Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 117–22, Patricia Gaillard-Seux, "Un pseudo-Démocrite énigmatique: Bolos de Mendès," in Frédéric LeBlay, ed., *Transmettre les savoirs dans les mondes hellénistique et romain* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009), pp. 223–43 and Marek Węncowski, "Pseudo-Democritus or Bolos of Mendes," in *Brill's New Jacoby* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2011), available at http://uw.academia.edu/MarekWecowski/Papers/1121156/Pseudo-Democritus_or_Bolos_of_Mendes_BNJ_263_FGrHist_263_, along with the older works of Wilhelm Kroll, "Bolos und Demokritos," *Hermes* 69 (1934): 228–32, and Max Wellmann, *Die ΦΥΣΙΚΑ des Bolos Demokritos und der Magier Anaxilaos aus Larissa*, *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 7 (1928).

36 If Bolus was responsible for the *Chirocmeta*, one would very much like to know more about the works available to him at Alexandria and the sources from which they derived their information about Magian botanic and medical learning. Healing by plants (*uruuarō. baēšaza-*) is one of the three systems of medicine recognized in the Avesta (*Vīdaēuudāt* 7.44, *Yašt* 3.6), on which see further, Horst Fichtner, *Die Medizin im Avesta* (Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer, 1924), pp. 35–37, Dietrich Brandenburg, *Priesterärzte und Heilkunst im alten Persien* (Stuttgart: J. Fink, 1969), pp. 42–46, idem, "Avesta und Medizin," *Janus* 59 (1972): 269–307, esp. 299–303. The discussions of healing plants in *Greater Bundahišn* 13.1–2 and *Dēnkard* 4.157.44 may also have relevance. Finally, one cannot entirely discount the traditions that connect Democritus to Magian learning, given the arguments advanced by Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Entre Perses et Grecs, I. Démocrite et le mazdéisme. Religion, philosophie, science," *Transeuphratène* 11 (1996): 115–43, eadem, "Démocrite et le mazdéisme. Fragments sur l'homme," in Carlo G. Cereti, Mauro Maggi, and Elio Provasi, eds., *Religious themes and texts of pre-Islamic Iran and Central Asia. Studies in honour of Professor Gherardo Gnoli* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 2003), pp. 139–42.

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the Magi use for invoking the gods.[37] Second is the *Achaemenis* ("Achaemenid"), a leafless, amber-colored plant of India that prompts visions of deities. These visions are powerful and intimidating, but they work in two different ways, both of which help the kings in their royal duties (whence, presumably, the name). On the one hand, when administered to criminals, it forces them to confess their crimes, thereby restoring truth and justice.[38] On the other, when placed on the sword of a foreigner, it sends enemy armies into flight.[39] Along with the *Arianis* ("Aryan"), this is the only plant whose name reflects Persian origins, all others bearing the latinized constructions with which Pliny (or someone else) replaced their Greek antecedents (Ἀγλαοφῶτις, Ἀχαιμενίς, etc.). Behind the Greek, however, lay something else, for Pliny reports that the text he consulted and summarized "set down the Magian designations of all these plants."[40]

In addition to the *Achaemenis*, two other plants also induce visions, each in its own distinctive fashion. Just as the *Achaemenis* produces visions of divine powers (*varias numinum imaginationes*) that make the guilty confess and enemies flee, so the *Ophiusa* ("Serpentine") of Elephantine yields visions of snakes that prompt those guilty of sacrilege to commit suicide, while the *Thalassægle* ["Sea-radiance"] of the river Indus conjures up wonders (*miraculis*) that result in states of divine possession.[41] Other differences notwithstanding, all three

37 Pliny, *Natural History* 24.160: *Aglaophotim herbam, quae admiratione hominum propter eximium colorem acceperit nomen, in marmoribus Arabiae nascentem Persico latere, qua de causa et Marmaritim vocari; hac Magos uti, cum velint deos evocare*.

38 Ibid., 24.161: *Achaemenida, colore electri, sine folio nascentem Taradastilis Indiae, qua pota in vino noxii per cruciatus confiteantur omnia per varias numinum imaginationes; eandem Hippophobada appellat, quoniam equae praecipue caveant eam.*

39 Ibid., 26.18: *Achaemenide coniecta in aciem hostium trepidare agmina ac terga verti.*

40 Ibid., 24.166: *Atque harum omnium magica quoque vocabula ponit*.

41 Ibid., 24.164: *Thalassæglen circa Indum amnem inveniri, quae ob id nomine alio Potamaugis appellatur; hac pota lymphari homines obversantibus miraculis*. Most translations of this text are misled by the listing in Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), p. 1090 and fail to appreciate the relation between the two definitions given there: "I. To water, dilute with water; II. To drive out of one's senses, to distract with fear, to make mad." As recognized by Ernout and Meillet, *Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine*, op cit., pp. 666–67, A. Walde and J.B. Hofmann, *Lateinisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1965) 2: 833, Latin *lympha* – which always occurs in the plural, poetically denoting the waters, personified and divinized as Water-deities – is ultimately derived from or strongly influenced by Greek νύμφη. In corresponding fashion, to be *lymphātus* is equivalent to being νυμφόλεπτος, i.e. it denotes an inspired state resulting from possession by water-nymphs, as evident in the gloss provided by Paulus, ex Festo 120.12: *lymphaticus qui ex aqua quasi diuinat*. The fullest and

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plants are positive in their effects, as they help establish – or restore – justice, holiness, and inspiration, respectively.

Ordinarily, each territory is represented by one plant only, and *vice versa*. There are exceptions, however. Thus, the *Theangelis* ("Divine Messenger"), which the Magi use in divination, flourishes on mountain peaks of Syria and Crete (whose height put them close to the heavens), also in Babylon and Susa (close to the imperial center).[42] Altogether, sixteen regions are mentioned, but only three (Persia at the center; India and Ethiopia at the southeast and southwest peripheries) are associated with more than one plant. In each case a geographic subcategorization accounts for the duplication. Thus, for instance, while Elephantine in northern Ethiopia, is home to the *Ophiusa* and its serpent-visions, Meroe, to the far south, produces the *Æthiopis* ("Ethiopian"), which has the power to dry up streams and ponds,[43] and also counteracts dropsy.[44] Clearly, this plant, like its distinctive territory, was characterized by excessive dryness, just as the *Arianis* of Ariana possessed extraordinary heat. Fiery in color and collected when the sun is in Leo, its touch made wood burst into flame.[45]

One could continue to map the relations among these plants, which play on the binary oppositions of North/South, East/West, Center/Periphery, Land/Water, High/Low, Light/Dark, Hot/Cold, and Moist/Dry (Table 20.1). Fascinating though the details are, the general conceptualization is more important. Each plant is extraordinary in its powers, uniquely associated with the land of its origin, and able to create a specific good (or redress a given evil). At the level of vegetation, the text catalogues the pieces of absolute, unqualified "Happiness" that were scattered across the globe when original perfection was lost. Magian wisdom included detailed knowledge of these (and other) plants: their location, appearance, elementary qualities and, above all, how they could be used to help restore an ideal world.

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most perceptive discussion remains Jakob Wackernagel, "Lympha," *Archiv für lateinische Lexikographie* 15 (1908): 218–21.

42 Ibid.: *Theangelida in Libano Syriae, Dicte Cretae montibus et Babylone et Susis Persidis nasci, qua pota Magi divinent.*

43 Ibid., 26.18: *Aethiopide herba amnes ac stagna siccari.*

44 Ibid., 24.163: *Aethiopida in Meroe nasci, ob id et Meroida appellari, folio lactucae, hydropicis utilissimam e mulso potam.*

45 Ibid., 24.162: *Arianida in Arianis gigni, igneam colore; colligi, cum sol in leone sit. huius tactu peruncta oleo ligna accendi.*

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TABLE 20.1 Summary of Chiromecta's content, as recorded by Pliny, *Natural History* 24.160–66

Name	Effect	Qualities	Nature	Place
Aglaophotis **("Bright radiance")**	Invoke gods	Outstanding Color	Light, Hard	Arabian marble quarries
Achaemenis **("Achaemenid")**	Visions of divine powers; Forces criminal confessions; Routs enemies in battle	Amber color, no leaves	Royal	Among Taradastili of India
Theombrotion **("Food of the gods")**	Royal panacea; Justice	Peacock colors, outstanding fragrance	Totality, Moist, Royal	Elam, near the River Choaspes
Adamantis **("Adamant")**	Puts lions to sleep	Cannot be ground up	Hard	Armenia and Cappadocia
Arianis **("Aryan")**	Produces combustion	Fiery color	Hot	Ariana
Therionarca **("Beast-benumbing")**	Puts beasts to sleep	Antidote = hyena urine		Cappadocia and Mysia
Æthiopis **("Ethiopian")**	Dries streams and ponds; Cures dropsy	Lettuce-like Leaves	Dry	Ethiopia, Meroe
Ophiusa **("Serpentine")**	Snake visions; Sacrilegious led to suicide	Bluish, hard		Ethiopia, Elephantine
Thalassægle **("Sea-radiance")**	Wonder visions; Inspiration		Moist, Light	River Indus
Theangelis **("Divine messenger")**	Divination		High, Central, Priestly	Mt. Libanus of Syria, Mt. Dicte of Crete, Babylon and Persian Susa
Gelotophyllis **("Laugh-leaf")**	Visions; Laughter		Moist	Bactria, River Borysthenes

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TABLE 20.1 Summary of Chiromecta's content, as recorded by Pliny (*cont.*)

Name	Effect	Qualities	Nature	Place
Protomedia **("First among Medes")**	Festivity at banquets; Primacy with kings		Central, Royal	Persia
Casignetes **("Sister")**		Grows only with own species	Incestuous	
Helianthes **("Sunflower")**	Cooked with lion fat, saffron, and palm wine, produces bodily beauty		Light, High, Moist	Themiscyrene and maritime mountains of Cilicia
Hermesias **("Mercurial")**	Birth of children with noble souls and fine bodies	Compound of pounded pine nuts, honey, myrrh, palm wine, milk, and *Theombrotion*	Moist, life-sustaining	

4

Descriptions of three individual plants confirm that we are dealing with Iranian traditions, not Greek materials endowed with an Iranizing patina. The first is the *Theombrotion* ("Food of the gods"), a peacock-colored, sweet-smelling plant of the River Choaspes that heals all the king's ailments of body and mind, while also securing (his sense of) justice.[46] As I have tried to show elsewhere, the locus, appearance, and effects of this plant suggest its connection to the ideology of "wonder" (*fraša*) attested in the Old Persian inscriptions, also to mythic plants of the Zoroastrian tradition, especially the "Tree of All-Healing."[47]

46 Ibid.: *Theombrotion xxx schoenis a Choaspe nasci, pavonis picturis similem, odore eximio; hanc a regibus Persarum bibi contra omnia corporum incommoda; stabilitatem mentis et iustitiam, dantem Semnion a potentiae maiestate appellari.*

47 Lincoln, *"Happiness for Mankind"*, op cit., pp. 103–4 and 210–12. *Yašt* 12.17 describes this mythic tree as "standing in the middle of the World Ocean, good for healing, high in healing, called "All-Healing" by name, and laden with the seeds of all plants" (*yā hištaite*

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Second is the *Casignetes* ("Sister"), the sole plant for which no place of origin is given and no use specified. Its name, plus the fact that it grows only among plants of its own species, suggests its association with the endogamous ("incestuous") forms of marriage favored by Persians that so scandalized Greek authors.[48] Finally, there is the *Hermesias*, not a plant, but a mix of beneficent substances that combine to create and nurture new lives, perfect in body and spirit.

> *Hermesias* is not a plant, but a compound that produces children who are beautiful and good. It is made from pounded kernels of the pine nut, together with honey, myrrh, saffron, and palm wine, then mixed with *Theombrotion* and milk. He prescribes that this be drunk by those who would beget, then after conception, and by nursing mothers. Thus will be made excellent souls and good bodies.[49]

Every item of this mix could be discussed in detail: its sweet nurturent fluids, precious aromatics and spices, strong healing agents, and one should also note that the first-named of its components is beaten or pounded[50] to extract its essence, much as *hauma* (in Avesta, *haoma*) was treated in Iranian sacrificial rituals. David Flattery has already compared Pliny's description of the *Hermesias* to Avestan texts promising the birth of perfect sons to sacrificers

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maiδīm zraiiaŋhō vourukašahe yā hu.biš ərəδβō.biš yā vaoce vispō.biš nąma yąm upairi uruuaranąm vispanąm taoxma niδaiiat.). Pahlavi sources develop the imagery further still, stressing the plant's totalistic character, location at the world's center, near a fabulous body of water, and ability to cure all ills.

48 Plutarch, *Natural History* 24.165: *Casigneten, quoniam secum ipsa nascatur nec cum aliis ullis herbis, eandem Dionysonymphadem, quoniam vino mira conveniat.* On Persian "next-of-kin marriage," see Onorato Bucci, "Il Matrimonio fra consanguinei," *Apollinaris* 51 (1978): 291–319, Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Notes sur la parenté chez les perses au debut de l'empire achéménide," *Achaemenid History* 2 (1987): 53–67, esp. pp. 56–57, eadem, "Les *xwétōdas*, ou marriages 'incestueux' en Iran ancien," in Pierre Bonte, ed., *Épouser au plus proche. Inceste, prohibitions et strategies matrimoniales autour de la Méditerranée* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1994), pp. 113–25; on the way such marriages were depicted and regarded by Greek authors, de Jong, *Traditions of the Magi,* op cit., pp. 424–32.

49 Pliny, *Natural History* 24.166: *Hermesias ab eodem vocatur ad liberos generandos pulchros bonosque non herba, sed compositio e nucleis pineae nucis tritis cum melle, murra, croco, vino palmeo, postea admixto theombrotio et lacte. Bibere generaturos iubet et a conceptu, puerperas partum nutrientes; ita fieri excellentes animi et formae bonis.*

50 The verb used (in the passive) is Latin *tero*, which most frequently describes the way grain is beaten or flailed to separate wheat from chaff. Treatment of pine nuts, however, is not designed to separate two parts that are both dry, but to extract core fluid and this is done with mortar and pestle, just as pine nuts are treated in the production of Genovese pesto.

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of *haoma*, and there is more to be said along these lines.[51] Inter alia, one should note that *haoma* offerings were accompanied by song, intended to heal and renew all creation, and involved mixing the pounded plant with milk, pure water, and other life-enhancing substances.[52] Here, as throughout, the *Chirocmeta* seems aware of Iranian ritual practices and a system of knowledge built on them.

5

Pliny took care to summarize the *Chirocmeta* accurately and within this long passage, he scrupulously abstained from editorial comment. Elsewhere, however, he dismissed the claims advanced in that text as "the empty beliefs of magic" (*magicae vanitates*), whose preposterous exaggerations threaten to undermine faith in plants' genuine healing powers.[53] This is consistent with his view of magic as "the most fraudulent of arts,"[54] for which he offered a much-discussed genealogy.[55] In his account, magic originated in Persia as a debased

51 David Stophlet Flattery and Martin Schwartz, *Haoma and Harmaline. The Botanical Identity of the Indo-Iranian Sacred Hallucinogen "Soma" and its Legacy in Religion, Language, and Middle Eastern Folklore* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 60–62 and note 25, with reference to *Yasna* 9.1–15 and 10.15.

52 Most fully on the daily offering of *haoma* within the Zoroastrian *yasna* ("sacrifice"), see Dastur Firoze M. Kotwal and James W. Boyd, *A Persian Offering. The Yasna: A Zoroastrian High Liturgy* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1991). For translation of the Yasna liturgy, Jean Kellens, *Études avestiques et mazdéennes* (Paris: de Boccard, 2006–); and for the hymn to Haoma (*Yasna* 9–11), Éric Pirart, ed. and trans., *L'éloge mazdéen de l'ivresse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004).

53 Pliny, *Natural History* 26.18–20 mocks the plants treated in 24.160–167 (where the *Chirocmeta* is summarized) and introduces this debunking with the assertion: *magicae vanitates … abrogare herbis fidem cunctis possent*. As Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin," op cit., p. 63 observes, the phrases *magorum vanitas*, *magica vanitas, and magicae vanitates* virtually become leitmotifs in certain parts of the *Natural History*. The first is found at *Natural History* 22.20, 28.89, 28.94, 37.54, and 37.124; the second at 29.81 and 37.118; the third at 26.18, 27.57, and 30.1.

54 Ibid., 30.1: *In paucis tamen digna res est, de qua plura dicantur, vel eo ipso quod* ***fraudulentissima artium*** *plurimum in toto terrarium orbe plurimisque saeculis valuit*.

55 Ibid., 30.1–18, which opens with the programmatic pronouncement: *Magicas vanitates saepius quidem antecedente operis parte, ubicumque causae locusque poscebant, coarguimus detegemusque etiamnum.* On the importance of this passage, see, inter alia, Bidez and Cumont, *Les mages hellenisés*, op cit., Vol. 2, pp. 9–14, Raffaela Garossi, "Indagine sulla formazione del concetto di magia nella cultura romana," in Paolo Xella, ed., *Magia. Studi di Storia delle Religioni in memoria di Raffaela Garossi* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1976), pp. 13–93, esp. pp. 17–31, Richard Gordon, "Aelian's peony: the location of magic in Graeco-Roman

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offshoot of medicine that went on to encompass equally debased styles of religion and mathematics (= astrology). In this form, it was carried west by the Magi and their students, with Democritus establishing magic in the same era that Hippocrates introduced medicine.[56] (Mis)representing itself as a "higher and more sacred" form of healing,[57] magic arouses unrealistic hopes and preys on elemental fears, while binding the gullible in its "triple chains."[58]

For Pliny, the relation of magic to medicine is much like that of a bastard to a legitimate sibling. When one of these categories is at issue, the other is often implicit, as in the opening passage of Book Twenty-four, which anticipates the *Chirocmeta* summary that will come at the book's climax, when discussion shifts from medicine to magic.[59]

> Neither the woods nor the rougher face of nature are destitute of medicine: nowhere has the sacred mother of all things failed to distribute remedies for people so that the wilderness itself still produces medicines, with wonders of sympathy and antipathy appearing everywhere.... From this was medicine born. It pleased nature for these things alone to be the remedies that are acquired everywhere, easy to discover and without expense, from which we live. Later, the deceivers among men and

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tradition," *Comparative Criticism* 9 (1987): 59–95, esp. pp. 74–77, Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. Franklin Philip (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 49–56, Patricia Gaillard-Seux, "Sympathie et antipathie dans *l'Histoire Naturelle* de Pline l'Ancien," in Nicoletta Palmieri, ed., *Rationnel et irrationnel dans la medicine ancienne et medieval. Aspects historiques, scientifiques et culturels* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2003), pp. 113–28, esp. pp. 126–28, and Rives, "*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin," op cit., pp. 61–65.

56 *Natural History* 30.10: *plenumque miraculi et hoc, partier utrasque artes effloruisse, medicinam dico magicenque, eadem aetate illam Hippocrate, hanc Democrito inlustrantibus, circa Peloponnesiacum Graeciae bellum quod gestum est a trecentesimo urbis nostrae anno.* The importance of Democritus is asserted at *Natural History* 24.156, 24.160, 25.13–15, 26.19, and 30.9, usually alongside that of Pythagoras.

57 Pliny, *Natural History* 30.2: *natam primum e medicina nemo dubitabit ac specie salutari inrepsisse velut* ***altiorem sanctioremque medicinam***.

58 Ibid: *ita possessis hominum sensibus* ***triplici vinculo*** *in tantum fastigii adolevit, ut hodieque etiam in magna parte gentium praevaleat et in oriente regum regibus imperet.*

59 *Natural History* 24.156 treats that shift as a necessary development of the argument: *In promisso herbarum mirabilis occurrit aliqua dicere et de magicis. quae enim mirabliores?* The rhetorical question is posed with irony, as the truly wondrous (*mirabilis*) medical properties of ordinary plants are contrasted with the inflated claims that misrepresent purportedly magical plants as "more wondrous" (*mirabilior*) still. See further Philippe Mudry, "*Mirabilia* et *magica.* Essai de definition dans l'*Histoire Naturelle* de Pline l'Ancien," in Olivier Bianchi and Olivier Thévenaz, eds., *Mirabilia – Conceptions et representations de l'extraordinaire dans le monde antique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 239–52.

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> the profiteering of clever people devised these workshops, in which it is promised to everyone that (an extension or enhancement of) their own life is available for sale. Straightaway, inexplicable compounds and mixtures are invoked, Arabian and Indian remedies are valued highly, and the medicine for a small sore is priced as if it came from the Red Sea, although even the poorest person consumes true remedies daily. And if people would only seek an herb or a shrub from their garden, none of the arts would be cheaper than medicine.[60]

The argument is clear. Proper medicine is simple, local, cheap, and easy, working with plants that are found everywhere, being the products of a benevolent Nature, "sacred mother of all things."[61] Magical substances stand in pointed contrast to such *materia medica*. The *Hermesias* compound provides the most pointed example, but one could also cite the way the *Helianthes* ("Sunflower") of Themiscyrene and the maritime mountains of Cilicia is treated, according to *Chirocmeta*. Boiled in palm wine with saffron and the fat of a lion, it yields an unguent with which Magi and kings anoint their bodies to make them more attractive.[62] In both cases, the substance in question is complicated, artificial, imported and expensive. What it promises, however, is not just the restoration of health, but the realization of some extraordinary ideal of perfection.

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60 Ibid., 24.1–5: *Ne silvae quidem horridiorque naturae facies medicinis carent, sacra illa parente rerum omnium nusquam non remedia disponente homini, ut medicina fieret etiam solitudo ipsa, ad singula illius discordiae atque concordiae miraculis occursantibus.... Hinc nata medicina. Haec sola naturae placuerat esse remedia parata vulgo, inventu facilia ac sine inpendio e quibus vivimus. postea fraudes hominum et ingeniorum capturae officinas invenere istas in quibus sua cuique homini venalis promittitur vita. statim compositiones et mixturae inexplicabiles decantantur, Arabia atque India remedia aestimantur, ulcerique parvo medicina a Rubro mari inputatur, cum remedia vera cotidie pauperrimus quisque cenet. nam si ex horto petantur, aut herba vel frutex queratur, nulla atrium vilior fiat.*

61 Ibid.: *sacra illa parente rerum omnium*. The benevolent Nature that Pliny makes responsible for the ubiquity of healing plants is comparable to the ideal intentions of Ahura Mazdā when he shaped the original creation. Iranian cosmogonies narrate a second transformative moment, however, when "the Lie" entered the world, fragmenting its initial unity, corrupting its substance, and scattering the constituent pieces of Happiness (Old Persian *šiyāti*) to the far corners of the globe, where they remain rare and difficult of access. Pliny's contrast of medicine and magic thus relies on a contrast between different geographies and economies of healing substance, which in turn rely on different cosmologies and cosmogonies.

62 Ibid. 24.165: *Helianthes vocat in Themiscyrena regione et Ciliciae montibus maritimis, folio myrti. Hac cum adipe leonino decocta, addito croco et palmeo vino, perungui Magos et Persarum reges, ut fiat corpus aspectu iucundum; ideo eandem Heliocallida nominari.*

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Even when magic plants are not treated in elaborate ways or recombined in complex concoctions, they still promise equally extravagant results: communication with the gods (*Aglaophotis*, *Thalassægle, Theangelis*), for example, mastery of animals (*Adamantis*, *Therionarca*), or perfection of the world by the establishment of truth (*Achaemenis*), justice (*Theombrotion*), religion (*Ophiusa*), or festivity (*Protomedia*) and laughter (*Gelotophyllis*). None of this comes cheap, however, for each of the plants with such powers is rare, exotic, and precious, coming from climes far removed from Rome or Greece. Those who have – or feign – knowledge of these substances (also how to obtain and prepare them) can offer their services at a great price. Worse still, the foreign tinge of magic leads Pliny to cast this as a national security issue:

> Truly, it is thus: in their greatness, the Roman people have lost their old habits and we are conquered in the act of conquering. We submit to foreigners and by one of the arts, they rule over their rulers. But I will say more of these things elsewhere.[63]

6

Although Pliny's contrast of medicine (coded as natural/simple/ubiquitous/cheap) to a model of "magic" conceived as its antithesis (i.e. artificial/complex/exotic/ expensive) is schematically organized for polemic purpose, such a construction does help one understand the transformation of Persian priests into self-proclaimed wonderworkers of dubious repute. In part, this metamorphosis took place inside the tendentious western imaginary, but not entirely so. To be sure, the way Magi were perceived and described changed over time, but such shifts interacted with changes in the way they understood and represented themselves, and – further still – changes in the way they made their living.

Most importantly, the loss of royal patronage (at the fall of the Achaemenid empire [331 BCE], or earlier in individual cases) deprived Magian priests of their income, security, and base of operations. In these radically changed circumstances, they were forced to convert such capital as they possessed – i.e., knowledge derived from centuries of speculation on sacrificial rituals and their associated cosmogonic traditions, also their reputation for such esoteric

63 Ibid., 24.5: *ita est profecto, magnitudine populi R. perdidit ritus, vincendoque victi sumus. paremus externis, et una atrium imperatoribus quoque imperaverunt. verum de his alias plura.*

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lore – into practices and products that could be sold piecemeal in whatever terrains they happened to traverse.[64]

In this historically salient example, the distinction between "priest" and "magician" is not primarily one between two different forms of knowledge/power, nor between the perspectives from which these are viewed and evaluated, although surely such considerations have their importance. Crucial, however, is the distinction between two different modes – and sets of relations – for constituting certain contents as "knowledge" and converting these to profit. The historically earlier system, centered in Achaemenid Iran, was based on relations of patronage that bound Magi, kings, and gods together in ongoing practices of ritual exchange. In pointed contrast, the later system that emerged in diaspora was based on entrepreneurship, commodification, and sporadic transactions of buyer and seller.

Durkheim famously observed that priests have congregations, while magicians have clienteles, a formula that may work well for modernity.[65] In the ancient world, however, it is more often the case that priests had patrons (usually the king or state) and claimed privileged access to the gods, while magicians had exotic commodities and a seductive – but also suspect – line of patter.

64 Here, my argument is influenced by and indebted to several outstanding historians of religions who studied other situations where priestly bodies adapted to the loss of royal patronage, most notably Jonathan Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," in Birger A. Pearson, ed., *Religious Syncrtetism in Antiquity. Essays in Conversation with Geo Widengren* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 131–56 and "The Temple and the Magician," in Jacob Jervell and Wayne Meeks, eds., *God's Christ and His People: Essays Honoring Nils Alstrup* (Oslo: Universitetsverlag, 1976), pp. 233–47, both reprinted in Smith, *Map is Not Territory. Studies in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 67–87 and 172–89, respectively, Cristiano Grottanelli, "Healers and Saviors of the Eastern Mediterranean in Preclassical Times," in Ugo Bianchi, ed., *La soteriologia dei culti orientali nell' Impero Romano* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1982), pp. 649–70, and Walter Burkert, "Itinerant Diviners and Magicians: A Neglected Element in Cultural Contacts," in Robin Hägg, ed., *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation* (Stockholm: Paul Åstrom, 1983), pp. 115–19.

65 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* trans. Karen Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995; French original 1912), p. 42.

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